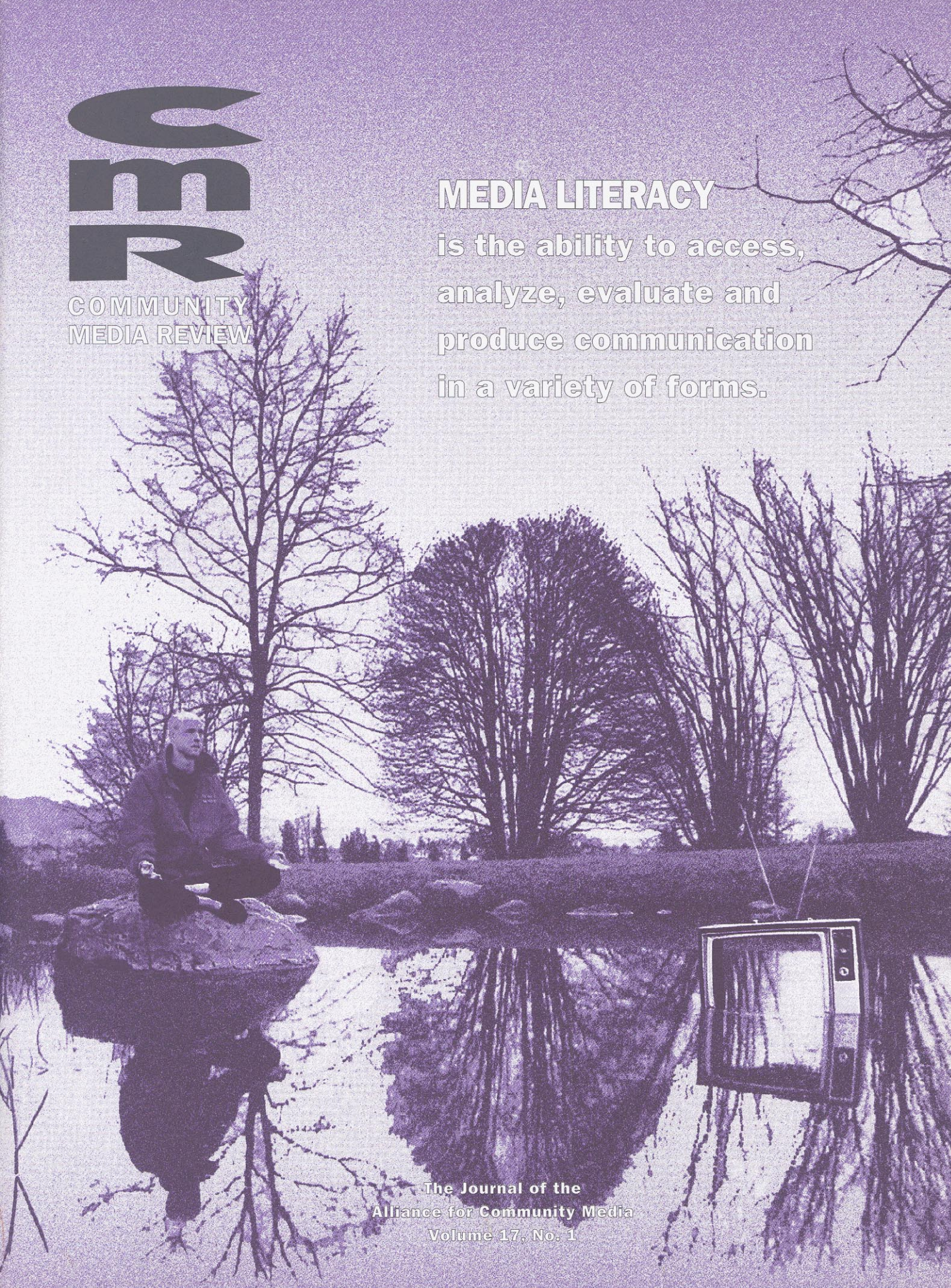


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MEDIA REVIEW

MEDIA LITERACY

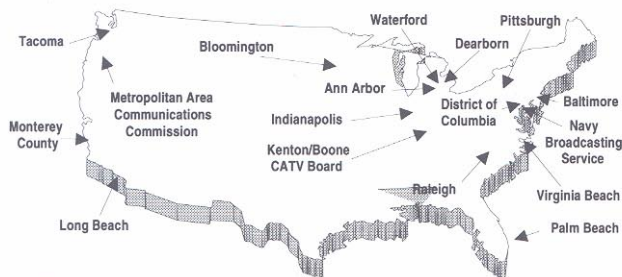
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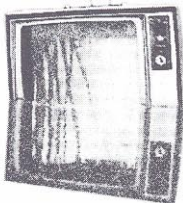
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In this Issue

Media Literacy

Media Literacy – It's About Power, *Paula Manley and Robin Reidy* **3** / The Real Work is Media Education, *Fred Johnson* **4** / Cambridge Teens Counter Alcohol Advertising, *Maurice Rucker* **6** / Access as Media Education, *Renee Hobbs* **7** / Media Literacy in the Community Access World, *jesikah maria ross* **10** / Young People Find Their Voices with The Mirror Project, *Roberto Arévalo* **12** / Media Literacy in the Northwest, *Gloria DeGaetano and Robin Reidy* **13** / Reading Television to Make Change, *Greg Boozell* **14** / TV and the Growing Brain, *Gloria DeGaetano* **15** / The Billerica Initiative Brings Media Literacy to Middle School, *Renee Hobbs* **17** / Toward a Media Wise Society, *Marieli Rowe* **18** / The Information Highway, *Herbert I. Schiller* **20** / Center for Media and Values Plans to "Reinvent", *Elizabeth Thoman* **22** / The 16 Best Books on Television, Mass Media and Communications **22** / Culture Jamming with the Media Foundation, *Paula Manley* **23** / Selected Media Literacy Resources **20**

Columns

Anthony Riddle, Chair; T. Andrew Lewis, Executive Director **25**
Alan Bushong, Public Policy; Nantz Rickard, International **26**

Cover photo: The Media Foundation • Imaging: John Haafke
Thanks to Laurel Butman for editorial assistance

CTR>>>>CMR

The word Media is plural for medium, which is described by the American Heritage Dictionary this way:

- 1) Something occupying a position or having a condition midway between extremes,
- 2) An intervening substance through which something is transmitted or carried on, as an agency for transmitting energy,
- 3) A surrounding environment in which something functions and thrives,
- 4) The substance in which a specific organism functions and thrives,
- 5) The materials used in a specific artistic technique.

With the change this issue of our name from *Community Television Review* to *Community Media Review*, we want to create a surrounding environment for the organism "access maven" to function and thrive. We want to create an intervening substance for transmitting energy. We want to provide a space for the materials for artistic techniques.

We hope you approve; we hope you read, learn, share and act.

– Dirk Koning, Editorial Board Chair

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Rethinking Greg Boozell

To the Editor:

First let me say how happy I am to see a well articulated contrary opinion in CTR. . . (CMR? . . . just doesn't have the same ring to it). However, Greg Boozell's "Rethinking Community Communications Centers" [Sep/Oct '93] is flawed in its premise, argument and timing!

The first paragraph of Greg's opinion speaks to his misunderstanding of what access is all about. "I am dubious of the return that any access center may garner as a result of diversifying their respective technological service offerings." Whoa! We don't look for some sort of return for our efforts. Our job is to empower the public, our communities and my neighbor to use electronic tools for communication. They are the ones who get some sort of return for their efforts. We provide access.

The examples he cites are quite contrary to his argument. A video camera, fax machines and computer modems in the hands of the public has changed the world. Rodney King and Tiananmen Square are great examples of that. We each have many local examples.

This would have been constructive material five years ago, when the debate over our name change and mission began. But that was then. This is now. Access centers all over the country are learning who their state public utility commissioners are, following major mergers of cable and telephone companies. Our center is involved in a major grant for extending and expanding information and educational networks, by linking telephone, computer modems, and cable television. We are discussing tele mentoring and on-line data services in conjunction with video programs on access.

We are entering a new age of access. The debate is over.

Michael Henry, Executive Director
Community Access Television
of Salina [KS], Inc.

Open the Windows

To the Editor:

Noboru Takahashi's letter in the September/October 1993 issue said some of the things which I have been trying to say to people here in Sacramento since we were challenged over a year ago to "re-evaluate" our programming. While no one came out and said "Okay, drop the artists, let's be safe and concentrate on community organizations," the results of financial cut-backs and threats of dropping present management altogether, has produced a tremendous impetus to soft-pedal the risk taking – and "outreach" to community groups and "programming goals" seems to be an emphasis.

In truth, art and artists have produced more social change in every age than any politician could hope for, and in more ways. While community organizations CAN do a lot of work to improve particular situations, it is through art and the various mediums art may employ, that people "see."

Every organization exists first and foremost to perpetuate its own existence. To keep from mirroring only its own needs, it must have a window to look outside, to keep its bearings.

Commercial TV is a carnival fun house for the most part. Sit-coms and soaps mirroring only each other ad "finitum," distorting and twisting their (and many viewers) view of humanity with each reflected reflection. And news is just another "made for TV movie." Media becomes our reality. And media IS our community.

Public access media can provide some windows. Even the smallest crack that looks "outside," into someone's life and separate perspective, gives some balance, something to hold on to. Independent artists have often developed ways of presenting things that shake and break our fun-house mirror images. It takes awhile to recognize a window and re-orient ourselves sometimes, but we desperately NEED the precious openings, the independence, that artists offer.

– Jan Zacharias, Sacramento, CA

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in this country, our ability to exercise power — personally and politically — is inexorably linked to our experiences with media, particularly television. **Media literacy** — the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and produce communication in a variety of forms — is all about power. The power that comes from understanding who controls media systems and why. The power that comes from learning how media messages are put together. The power that comes from taking media tools *into our own hands* to communicate, to create meaning, and to counter the corporate culture with its insistence on endless consumption.

Media literacy is fundamental to the survival of democracy in the information age. Without media literacy, it is unlikely that we will fully exercise our power to envision alternatives, re-build our sense of community, organize politically or reclaim our civic life. In this issue of CMR we explore the promise — and the challenges — of working toward a media literate society, and we consider the important role community media centers and practitioners have in carrying this work forward.

Authors of this issue look at the big picture as well as current media education practices and projects. **Fred Johnson** advocates for a redefinition of our community access centers as centers for media education. **Maurice Rucker** chronicles the experiences of a group of teens who spent their summer exploring media messages and launching a public education campaign to counter the effects of alcohol advertising. **Renée Hobbs** reports on one community's innovative and subversive response to Channel One, and she offers practical ideas for integrating media literacy into access center operations.

Many community access centers around the country are already engaged in teaching media literacy. **jesikah maria ross** gives examples of who's doing what now. **Greg Boozell** describes how Chicago Access Corporation incorporates the political and economic implications of media into its teaching. And **Roberto Arévalo** describes how young people are gaining a better understanding of themselves and their communities through their video work in *The Mirror Project*.

Most children watch 5,000 hours of TV before they enter kindergarten. **Gloria DeGaetano** answers the question, "Can video technology be child-friendly and brain compatible?" as she examines the effects of TV viewing on the developing brain. Even before the era of television, the National Telemedia Council was involved with media education. **Marilei Rowe** chronicles the 40 year history of this pioneering organization.

Herb Schiller critiques the privatization of the information highway and the social implications of the "electronically organized total environment." For media literacy advocates, his call to bring the public interest into the decision-making process will ring true. Our issue concludes with a "**Selected Resources**" section to help you find useful materials and learn from others about the growing media literacy movement.



THE MEDIA FOUNDATION

MEDIA *Literacy*

**It's About
POWER!**

— Paula Manley and Robin Reidy,
Co-Editors-in-Chief

MEDIA Literacy

Key Concepts

1. All media are **CONSTRUCTIONS**.
2. All media **construct REALITY**.
3. **AUDIENCES** negotiate meaning in media.
4. Media have **COMMERCIAL** implications.
5. Media contain **IDEOLOGICAL** and **VALUE** messages.
6. Media have **SOCIAL** and **POLITICAL** implications.
7. Media have **UNIQUE AESTHETIC FORMS** that are closely related to **CONTENT**.

Reprinted from Media Literacy Resource Guide: Intermediate and Senior Division. Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Education, 1989.

The Real Work is Media Education

By Fred Johnson

Welcome to the Information Age. Community media are now in a head-long search for a new identity. The social context for the work we do has changed so much that there is no longer any status quo.

After years of investment and development in global communications and transportation systems, our institutions are changing, our economy is changing, our communications systems and patterns are changing; in other words our culture is changing. The long talked about "information age" is coming online with another wave of new technologies, home and work information appliances, job restructuring, new industries, different media and artistic forms, and a renewed interest in new learning and teaching styles.

Giant corporations are rushing to restructure the telecommunications infrastructure as evidenced by the recent spate of mergers that blurs the distinction between telephone companies and cable companies. The regulatory framework for telecommunications is shifting and may soon render cable franchises obsolete. The continuing crisis in public education has reached such proportion that change (some positive, much negative) is taking place rapidly. Arts funding, like all social spending, is still dwindling even with a Democratic administration in Washington. And the National Endowment for the Arts will never be the same again after the vandalism of the Bush Administration and the fundamentalist right.

In this time of enormous change, we have an opportunity to make community media an integral part of the cultural life of our communities.

How? By providing media education to a public engaged in what is nearly a "forced march" into the information economy. This means creating organizations that are elegant mixtures of media creation and media education. It means merging the tired old schism between media action and media analysis, and helping people become citizens rather than consumers in the new information spaces that are emerging. It means infusing media literacy principles throughout the production we undertake and the training programs we design. In short, it means redefining our community access centers as primary sites for community-based media education.

Why? As the information economy takes hold, developing a public with a critical understanding of media and citizenship is more important than ever. The information economy is not merely more channels, "virtual communities," sexy information appliances, interactivity,

lots of home computers and modems to facilitate learning, and all the other images now being used to sell it to the middle class.

The information economy involves the introduction of technologies of communication and control into nearly every aspect of our lives. Information storage, retrieval and transmission of images, sound, text and data are now integral to the operation of business and government. In order to be effective in this economy, even the oldest forms of industry must rely on new information technologies.

Unfortunately, the same technology that is used to build shiny new camcorders is used for surveillance in your favorite public park, or to monitor the activities of your friendly airline ticket agent. The use of information technologies threatens our privacy, our autonomy and our very definition of public space. These are tools of social control with power that would have been unimaginable to previous generations.

Historically, tyranny and domination have been accomplished primarily through physical violence and legal coercion; in an information economy, tyranny and domination are also accomplished through the sophisticated manipulation and control of our symbol systems and cultural environment. In such a world, the struggle to understand and democratize information structures is critical. Media education is how we do it.

Media Education Around the World. In the U.S., there were several early efforts to examine media critically. WNET's "Critical Viewing Skills Curriculum" was designed to be used in conjunction with broadcast fare. The Media Action Research Center's "Television Awareness Training" was designed for adults and teachers in a community workshop setting. And the Center for Understanding Media developed an excellent curriculum, "Doing the Media," based on the idea that children can be taught to use the media rather than being used by it. In the early 1980's, thanks to the rise of educational fundamentalism and budget cuts in the Reagan era, many media literacy initiatives in the U.S. came to an end. This was not true in the rest of the world.

Due in large part to the fact that television in most other countries is dominated by U.S. cultural industries, it has been easier for educators and politicians in those countries to see the importance of teaching about media.

The British Film Institute has for years produced excellent media literacy resources. Team Video in

In this time of enormous change, we have an opportunity to make community media an integral part of the cultural life of our communities. How? By providing media education to a public engaged in what is nearly a "forced march" into the information economy.

London and New Zealand provides media packets for use in all aspects of the curriculum, particularly the study of media. Team specializes in working with teams of teachers in curriculum design. In Ontario and Australia, media education has been mandated in the core curriculum. In France, the Ministry of Education supported the development of curricula in critical media thinking and modern citizenship.

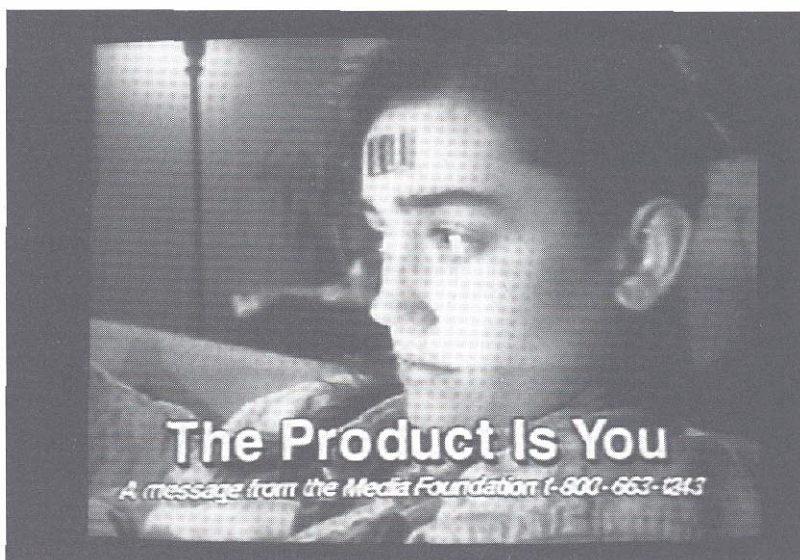
In Australia, Canada, England, Finland, France, Norway, Scotland, Sweden and Switzerland the official educational climate is favorable for media education. These countries have made great strides in media education; now these strides are finding their way to the U.S., piece by piece.

Media Literacy and Educational Reform. Media literacy in the U.S. is part of a larger educational reform movement which is often characterized by outcome-based learning, cultural diversity, increased use of media other than text, emphasis on partnerships between schools and communities, and an expanded definition of human intelligence called "multiple intelligences." Developed by Harvard psychologist and educator Howard Gardner, the multiple intelligences theory holds that humans have many types of "intelligences" — in areas such as music and visual communication, for instance — rather than just one "intelligence" defined as the ability to use logic and text.

Recent interest in educational reform stems from two very different social agendas. The first is a corporate agenda. With the restructuring to a global information economy, corporations no longer need workers trained in the old linear forms of education that have evolved from two centuries of industrial development. Paraphrasing Alvin Toffler, the American system of "industrial-style" education has provided little more than obedience training and modest literacy training, while creating a tolerance for boring and repetitive tasks. Such a system does not result in individuals capable of working in a global information environment using tools that require non-linear, highly flexible thought and communication skills. Training for these skills requires educational reform.

The second social agenda at play in the educational reform movement is the ongoing work of liberation which seeks to make American education more experiential ("hands-on"), more democratic and process driven, more directed toward critical thinking, and thus capable of educating more healthy and democratically inclined citizens. Although these two agendas now enjoy a refreshing bit of common ground, they come from two distinct places in society and ultimately have different outcomes in mind. One is concerned with creating workers and consumers; the other is concerned with creating citizens.

These converging agendas have contributed to the success of several educational reform efforts including the nationwide Coalition of



The core issue for media education, and the one most critical to democracy, is that reality — our world view — is socially constructed significantly by media.

and that of my colleagues in Media Working Group, these changes have removed many of the barriers that have stymied past efforts to create partnerships between community media practitioners and public schools.

Core Issues: Power and Democracy. There is a great continental divide between the use of media education to foster a purely aesthetic, or consumer oriented appreciation of media, and the use of media education to deal with the core issues of power and democracy. Just as with overall educational reform, the former approach is interested in creating consumers, the latter, citizens.

The core issue for media education, and the one most critical to democracy, is that reality — our world view — is socially constructed significantly by media. Media are not windows on the world nor objective representations of our world; they are subjective and laden with social biases regarding race, class, sexual orientation, gender and regional differences. Media are not separate from the exercise of power, they are deeply implicated in power and they are frequently developed and used as tools of domination and control.

Community media centers are well positioned to bring together the theory and practice of media literacy. After all, our charge is to educate and produce. Who is better able to take the lead in using media education to foster democracy in the information economy than community media centers? They are already the sites of discussions and debate around issues of community development, economic development and justice. Along with access to tools—the Internet, video, computers, multimedia—must come critical media education that reveals the social relationships within a society organized around electronic communication.

Aside from the long-range, democratic wisdom of emphasizing media education, community media centers have a very practical reason to do so: survival. Media literacy is necessary in order to increase the sophistication of our viewers. The appreciation of any media form is related to what the viewer brings to the screen/text. Appreciation is often expressed as support when franchises and funding hang in the balance. Similarly, it is not reasonable to expect the policy debate over

Essential Schools and a number of statewide initiatives. In Kentucky, for example, pressure for educational reform resulted in the state Supreme Court declaring the public school system unconstitutional because students in poorer districts were denied access to the same quality of education as more affluent students. This brought about legislative action, the Kentucky Educational Reform Act (KERA), a sweeping reform that includes democratic, school-based decision making councils, increased funding for education, and, most significantly for community media practitioners, an expanded curriculum. Based on my experience,

Cambridge Teens Counter Alcohol Advertising

with Positive Underground Media Productions (PUMP)

By Maurice Rucker

Last summer, as teen media coordinator for the Community Arts Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts, I had the opportunity to work with a diverse group of nine young people as they became more aware of media images and how the media affect their decisions about alcohol consumption.

The Community Arts Center initiated a six week collaboration to develop a media literacy program called PUMP (Positive Underground Media Productions) with the Substance Abuse Task Force, Cambridge Community Television (CCTV) and the Mayor's Summer Youth Employment Program. The Teen Media Program at the Community Arts Center of Cambridge provided production training and support for PUMP. Equipment access was provided by CCTV. Funding was provided by the Kendall Community Group, a consortium of area businesses.

What appealed to me about the project was the opportunity to use media as opposed to allowing media to use us. All too often, we accept what we see and hear in the media as "the truth" and we ignore the subtle ways that media manipulate us — especially youth and people of color. We would all like to believe that we're too sophisticated to be duped. Most people believe that advertisers are simply trying to sell their products to the consumer; actually, television programmers are selling us (the consumers) to advertisers. We are not an audience; we are demographics to be delivered.

PUMP was geared for youth in and around the Newtown Court housing development, the area with the highest crime rate in Cambridge. The participating teens were paid for a total of 20 hours per week. The goal of PUMP was to provide an opportunity for these young people to develop skills in television production and media literacy. More importantly, PUMP helped them develop a sense of who they are; it enabled them to communicate their fears and dreams to a wide audience, and it allowed them to combat the negative images and unfair portrayal of urban youth that are common in the media.

Over the course of the summer, the teens worked to develop critical viewing skills and translate their knowledge into video productions. In one video project, a one minute Public Service Announcement, the teens walk through their neighborhood as they each give facts about the roots of teen drinking and its effects.

The PUMP youth also took their alcohol awareness campaign on the road with a multi-media presentation for their peers and for non-profit organizations. The entertaining and informative presentation



Young People involved in PUMP make their own PSA about the roots of teen drinking and the effects of alcohol consumption.

debunked myths about alcohol consumption and illustrated the effects of alcohol through the use of charts, hand-outs and demonstrations.

Presentation elements included:

➤ **A survey of youth.** PUMP's most ambitious undertaking was a survey of 84 Cambridge youth from two high schools. The team conducted the survey, cross referenced their information and compiled a bar graph to illustrate their findings.

➤ **Analysis of alcohol ads.** An analysis of alcohol advertisements (television and print) included a discussion of target audiences, the styles and effects of the ads, ad placement, and ideas on how to counteract the ads.

➤ **Community comparisons.** The teens researched and devised a "community comparisons" chart on the number of liquor stores and bars in each community and how that number corresponded with the racial and economic breakdown of the area.

The students have proven to be effective presenters. Their presentation is interactive and has sparked discussion among 8 and 9 year olds at the Community Arts Center as well as among family, friends and staff of local human service agencies. The presentation has an almost conversational quality in which the audience is encouraged to interact with the team as well as with one another.

Watching PUMP in action, it is clear that even if the students don't have all the answers, they are knowledgeable about the problem of substance abuse. As 14-year-old Susie Recinos put it, "It's amazing to me how much they (advertisers) spend trying to get me to drink alcohol. Now I have the power to help people like me to see it too."

Maurice Rucker is Education Director for the Boston Film & Video Foundation. BFVF is a non-profit organization providing resources for artists and audiences interested in the development and creative use of media arts. He can be reached at BFVF, 1126 Boylston Street, Boston, MA 02215. Phone: (617) 536-1540.

All too often, we accept what we see and hear in the media as "the truth" and we ignore the subtle ways that media manipulate us—especially youth and people of color.

Access as Media Education

By Renee Hobbs

Most people who know something about television are concerned about those who don't. The level of public ignorance about the media is startling: most Americans can't explain why free expression is valuable to a democracy, they don't know what the FCC does (and does not do), they can't explain the difference between a network affiliate and an independent channel, and the phrase "local access" or "public access" just brings a blank stare.

People who work in local access do some important work in helping members of their communities understand television, by creating programs to inform and enrich communities, by providing access to voices who are traditionally denied access, and by carrying on the mission of cable access by fostering democratic participation, promoting free self-expression and inspiring social change. All these are forms of education which are valuable services to the community. But there is another mission for local access to take on—the challenge of working as media educators to help students and teachers and citizens in our communities to be more thoughtful in critically analyzing mass media.

Three central ideas are present in all media literacy efforts. First is an awareness of the constructed nature of representations in both print and visual media. Second is knowledge about the economic and political contexts in which media messages are produced by a variety of different institutions with specific objectives. Third is awareness and knowledge about the ways in which individuals construct meaning from messages and about the processes of selecting, interpreting and acting upon messages in various forms.

Media Literacy and Video Production in the U.S. Media education curriculum is currently in place in many countries. In the U.S. media education is often coordinated with video production activities. Why? Because video production is already vocationalized in many high schools, with almost 50 percent of American high schools conducting a course in video production. More importantly, in the U.S. there is a tradition of technology as a driving force in education reform. In the 1980s, we waited patiently as computers were identified as the change agent for American schools. But as usual, the computers were brought in without much effort to teach teachers new ways of organizing the classroom and new ways of teaching and learning. Likewise, we can't expect much real improvement in education as a result of Chris Whittle's effort to bring video monitors into the classrooms of more than 13,000 schools, if the technology is not accompanied by efforts to help teachers think about how to teach students to critically ana-

lyze news and advertising.

Henry Giroux, a professor of education at Penn State said, "It seems to me that to talk about production in only the technical sense is really to empower people in a very limited way. We need a kind of political project and an ethical referent to understand the broader parameters of production which are not simply about technology, but are about production informing analysis. Then people can raise fundamental questions about how cultural identities are structured within dominant practices of representation. You don't learn that by simply using a camera. To have access to a technology does not mean that the technology cannot be used against you—even though you learn the skills of the technology."

It's important to recognize that only some of the key media education concepts might be activated by production experiences. We all recognize the seduction of the technology makes it easy to push buttons without ever bothering to step outside the process to analyze what messages we've created and why we're making specific choices about images, words and music. It's important to be sure to include economic/political issues plus analysis of the home viewing experience when we teach young people how to make TV, else we risk further glorifying television instead of helping students analyze media.

The Role of Local Access in Media Education. What do local access members want? Often, they want to learn production skills. Unlike in education, where we teachers can use production activities as the "carrot" and media analysis as the "stick," you as local access educators do not have the captive audience that K-12 educators do. But, since the problem is lack of critical knowledge about the mass media, local access educators are one of the vast untapped resources of knowledge in many communities. Many have expertise in the economics and politics of cable television. Local access staff have expertise in teaching people how to construct and frame their messages through video, and many have expertise in talking about the wide variety of complex social and cultural consequences that result from 220 million Americans all sitting down to watch TV for 2.5 hours (or more) a day.

Here are five ways in which local access can promote and initiate media literacy efforts:

● **1. Develop programs which explicitly include media criticism.**

People love to talk about television, and "review" shows like Siskel and Ebert are ideal forums to hear different community members talk about news programs, sitcoms, dramas, movies and all the rest. There's always a controversy to discuss when the program focuses on the "media of the week."

continued next page

The Media Literacy Institute

Southwest Alternate Media Project (SWAMP) and Strategies for Media Literacy have collaborated to develop "Critical Thinking About the Media," a traveling series of five 6-hour training workshops providing a foundation for teaching about media. The series incorporates analysis, aesthetics and production elements of media arts/media literacy education. It is geared for artists, educators, administrators and related professionals with a focus on specific applications of media within curriculum and community service objectives. Customized workshops and presentations are also available.

For more information, contact SWAMP, 1519 West Main, Houston, TX 77006. Phone: (713) 522-8592.



Three central ideas are present in all media literacy efforts. First is an awareness of the constructed nature of representations in both print and visual media. Second is knowledge about the economic and political contexts in which media messages are produced by a variety of different institutions with specific objectives. Third is awareness and knowledge about the ways in which individuals construct meaning from messages and about the processes of selecting, interpreting and acting upon messages in various forms.

— Renee Hobbs

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Imagine a show where citizens in your community sit down to discuss the controversy about Murphy Brown and her baby and Dan Quayle. Did anybody do a show on that?

Parodies are media criticism, too. Young people are always eager to produce parody shows and many grownups dismiss them. Some local access studios explicitly forbid parodies. But the construction of parody is actually a sophisticated process involving many key media literacy concepts. For a parody to work, the form must closely imitate the message being parodied, but the content must satirize the message. The ability to manipulate form and content independently is a formidable skill, and most writers recognize that parody is a form at which young people have always excelled. Some critics have observed that writers between the ages of 15 to 30 can execute parody better than their older colleagues.

● **2. Include techniques of analysis in production training.**

This can be accomplished by compiling a reel of examples of various concepts taken from commercial television, independent productions and other works. The process of close viewing, where a small piece of video is played repeatedly and discussed, can be incorporated into training exercises to illustrate how music and language shape our interpretation of images, for example.

The public knows little about the economic and political forces that keep local access in business, or about how various court cases and cable-regulation may affect the future of local access. Include political and economic issues relevant to local access production in the training: let members in on the finances of access so they understand the role of regulation and how the cable industry supports access in exchange for monopoly privileges and use of public right of ways.

Right now, some local access folks perpetuate the romance of the mystique which mirrors the games played by commercial programmers. Some deliberately hide the political and economic issues from members, or minimize or underrepresent their own power in shaping the look of the local access channels. This only replicates the worst of what commercial media do and, more importantly, does not empower citizens to understand the complex realities of the power of media communication in our culture — which is that those who control what is represented on TV and when it is aired have power to shape public attitudes. For example, local access staff members have great latitude in deciding what programs to schedule at what times. This should be recognized as a form of power that can be used or abused, and it is important to give citizens the knowledge and skills to understand and analyze the choices local access staff members make each day, since the procedures and organizational routines of a

local access studio shape the kinds of programs community members can produce.

● **3. Provide special training for K-12 teachers who want to integrate video production activities into their curriculum.**

There is a great need to develop programs geared for teachers. Teachers need to learn the key media literacy concepts and how they relate to local access. New courses should be developed which provide teachers with the special support they need to delve into the non-technical issues of curriculum development, including sharing and evaluating resource materials, brainstorming new ideas, etc.

Most often, teachers will want to use video production in an informal way, not to make a specific program for air, but as an experimental process, to illustrate an idea. Local access facilities managers need to respect that not every use of the video equipment by teachers or students will result in a finished program. But as teachers, on their own, gain confidence in using video equipment in formal ways, they will gradually develop more ambitious plans and begin to develop programs suitable for access airing.

● **4. Provide special emphasis on working with youth.**

Since children's viewing habits are much less settled than older folks, they are most comfortable in learning to watch TV critically, including learning about the business behind the box. This is especially true if we include contextual knowledge about the relationship between television and politicians, television and multinationals, and television and the perpetuation of the status quo. Young people frequently want their hands on the equipment — never mind the talk — but they are usually receptive when they see adults engaged in dynamic, active talk about television.

● **5. Form a media education study group.**

A study group is an informal meeting, usually held once a month, where people can gather to learn more about mass media. Generally, there is a speaker who presents a topic, a teacher who demonstrates a lesson plan, or a screening and discussion of a popular program or the work of an independent producer. The Harvard Media Education Study Group, now in its third year, started with a group of ten people and now includes a mailing list of more than 135 members, including media professionals, members of the local access communities, scholars from the Boston area, teachers in K-12, students, activists, artists and parents. By collaborating with a local college, school department, newspaper or public television station, it is easy to begin a study group and make use of the local talent for presentations. This kind of outreach sends a message that it is important for everyone to continue to learn about the mass media.

Obstacles and Opportunities. Let's not be simplistic. There are a number of obstacles to implementing changes like these. I'm working on a research project which examines those factors which

account for the cases of strong and effective collaboration between K-12 educators and members of the local access community—and those factors which make such collaboration impossible or doomed to failure. One obstacle is the very different set of expectations that educators have about what it takes to make television. Since we take in so much commercial television, we take it for granted, and have very little understanding of the immense amount of talent and time needed to produce. Here's where the local access community needs to tell its own story better, by telling the stories of the unsung heroes who devote huge amounts of time to the construction of community media.

There are a number of very important reasons why the media education movement will never succeed without the help of the local access community. First, access to technology is limited. Even with more than five million camcorders being sold each year, this technology is not yet readily available in public schools or in urban areas. Most importantly, the "amateur," by definition, uses video in ways which do not encourage the development of critical viewing skills—so the expertise and the ability of local access community members is vital. Who else can do it if not you?

Secondly, because we get all of our information about the world from media, the commercial media system is very unlikely to be an agent of its own unmasking. Somebody has to do it, especially the complicated stuff about how audiences are really a form of product that broadcasters sell to advertisers; about how only the rich and powerful can control messages which reach the mass audience; about how our expectations that TV can be easy and mindless (and titillating and provocative) means that we audience members are at least partly responsible for the quality of TV.

The alternative media community holds promise for genuine social change, but this promise can only be realized if the American public has the ability to perceive the real value of having an alternative to

We need to help citizens gain critical distance about watching TV, an activity which most of us do just as spontaneously and naturally as waking up in the morning.

commercial media, and right now, most American citizens do not. We need to help citizens gain critical distance about watching TV, an activity which most of us do just as spontaneously and naturally as waking up in the morning. And we need to help people scrutinize the products of commercial media in ways that they currently do not.

The diversity of visions and voices that access programming provides can only be valued by citizens when they have the knowledge to appreciate the context in which alternative media is

different from commercially driven media. But once citizens have this critical distance to evaluate both local access and mass media, the theory of access will become more than just a good idea; it will become a way to counter corporate power and a way to re-shape the media to center on community, citizenship and the public interest.

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The Real Work is Media Education

continued from page 9

the importance of community media centers to rise much above naively framed issues of programming quality, or choices between buying police cruisers and filling pot holes, until the sophistication of policy makers and their constituents rises through media education.

Media Literacy Starts at Home.

Discussion of media literacy within our field is often focused on how to provide services to a poorly informed public. Perhaps a better starting point would be to examine our own assumptions about the very nature of communication. Most media practitioners in the U.S. have absorbed as a working assumption a notion of communication based on engineering principles, comparing a media message to an electrical

current going through a wire. It assumes that media messages are objective representations of reality rather than something subjectively created by people. This is the way people with social power think about mass communications, but it is not necessarily a good way for the rest of us to think.

This "transmission" model fails to recognize that communication is the creation of meaning by people; this means people with different social relationships and different understandings of power based on factors like race, gender, age, class and many others. If we look at communications as the creation of meaning, it allows us to see that meaning is negotiated based on existing social relationships and subject to all the differences present in society. Thus, many different meanings can be created depending on those differences.

When we think about communication as an exchange of meaning, we can talk more easily about the social consequences of our acts as artists and community media practitioners. Possibilities open for us to produce work in partnership with other people rather than as an individual artist or journalist.

When we understand that communication is based on social relationships, we see that our work is not simply "providing a communication opportunity" in some neutral way. As community media centers and media makers, our work is as much about furthering public discourse and social change as it is about making programs. To ignore that fact will only recreate the same old social patterns in a new glitzy electronic space. Taking a leadership role in media education provides us with "the real work" to do in our communities, and it can provide us with the conceptual tools and the self awareness needed to do the job.

Fred Johnson is a media artist and founding member of Media Working Group, a non-profit media education and production organization. He is Training Coordinator at Tualatin Valley Community Access. Contact him at TVCA, 1815 NW 169th Place, Suite 6020, Beaverton, OR 97006. Phone: (503) 629-8534.

As community media centers and media makers, our work is as much about furthering public discourse and social change as it is about making programs. To ignore that fact will only recreate the same old social patterns in a new glitzy electronic space.



The mainstream of our culture is television, which is on an average of seven hours a day. It's not a product of the home, family, community or even the native country for some, but the transnational corporations with something to sell. Entertainment is the main source of information for most people... and whoever tells all the stories will guide what we think and do as a civilization.

— George Gerbner,
Dean Emeritus,
Annenberg School for
Communications,
University of
Pennsylvania

It is estimated by the time youngsters graduate from high school, many of them will have watched television 22,000 hours, compared to only half that number in school. By 18, young people will have been exposed to as many as 18,000 televised murders and 800 suicides."

— Carnegie Council on
Adolescent
Development, 1992

A Report from the Field

Media Literacy in the Community Access World

By jesikah maria ross

For more than 20 years, public access television advocates have worked to empower community members to make their own TV programs free of the conventions and restrictions inherent in commercial programming. The intended result of such work was not simply TV programs, but rather the facilitation of public dialogue, community development and social change.

Ironically, given the opportunity to produce and cablecast, many access users uncritically mimic the conventions of commercial broadcasting, limitations and all. Access has provided the public with the power to produce and to be heard, but over the last two decades it's become clear that equipment, technical knowledge, and an airdate are only half the battle.

The other half of the equation is critical viewing — teaching people to identify and to question the language of television, its conventions, and its political and economic underpinnings. Media literacy involves both critical viewing and production.

Access training already teaches the production component of media literacy. Many access centers around the country are now working to integrate the analytical aspects of media literacy into their production training. Below are some examples.

The Orientation. The orientation session is the most common time to communicate the analytical concepts of media literacy to trainees. It is the one talk-heavy moment in the training process when trainers don't emphasize hands-on experience, so it's a perfect time to begin building critical viewing skills.

During orientation, many access trainers provide an overview of access and discuss self-representation, access as a First Amendment forum, effective message-making, intended audiences, the distinction between broadcasting and narrowcasting, and the importance of local community communication.

Some access centers use clips from commercial broadcasting to illustrate TV's conventions. At Tualatin Valley Community Access (TVCA) in metropolitan Portland, Oregon, Paula Manley shows a brief tape of commercial clips and engages trainees in a discussion of the values and implicit ideological perspective conveyed. These are some of the questions she asks: What values do you see communicated here? What are the biases? Who is being represented? Does this represent you? Did you notice any special

production techniques that were used to heighten our response?

At 'Olelo in Honolulu, Ross Braver poses a rhetorical question to trainees: How can a person get her/his message on TV? He then provides the following examples to illustrate the limited options found in the broadcast model.

1) People can pay their own way à la the informercials of Ross Perot. Buy your own time and produce your own message. The moral of this story: If you have the money, you have the access. Or as A.J. Liebling said, "Freedom of the press is guaranteed only to those who own one."

2) People can send networks a press release requesting media coverage. In this case the "event" must be considered newsworthy and coverage will be framed by the editorial powers of the station.

3) People can approach the networks and submit to the restrictions mandated by commercial sponsorship.

4) People can approach PBS. In addition to being highly competitive, producers generally need to focus on non-controversial subject matter, secure their own funding and cater to their sponsor's wishes.

Pre-Production. Buffalo Access' Armin Heurich uses the first session of a four-session training to interrogate the media's claims to "truth" and "objectivity," and challenge the way commercial media purport to represent others (or simply don't represent them). He uses access tapes to demonstrate the concepts of point of view and narrowcasting in contrast to broadcast television.

Heurich shows examples from *First Nation News*, a Native American news program, to focus discussion on the limitations of commercial TV. After this discussion, he has trainees identify a hypothetical project and conduct a pre-production brainstorming session to list the goals of the production, the intended audience, and how to make an impact on the community.

Lisa Horner at Tucson Community Cable Corporation teaches a producers' class in which she invites a veteran access producer to show work and field questions. She uses this presentation to illustrate the differences between broadcast and access, and to demonstrate the value of access. She poses questions such as: What was the message or intent of the program? Who are you trying to reach? Tell us

Access training already teaches the production component of media literacy. Many access centers around the country are now working to integrate the analytical aspects of media literacy into their production training.

about some of your production choices? What worked or was most rewarding to you? What would a broadcast approach to this subject look like? How did it have a community impact?

Ross Braver shows tapes that contrast formats and conventions. He shows the same subject presented in different formats (music video, news show, game show) to demonstrate form-content relationships. In addition, he compares conventions. For instance, he will show a children's baking show in which every transition is signalled by a star wipe, and then show a news program that uses the wipe in the same way. Why does it look okay in one show and not the other? he asks. What do wipes mean to a viewer? What are the rules of TV's language? What happens when the rules are broken?

Field/Studio Production. Trainers at TVCA have trainees produce 30-second "video introductions" as the first production exercise. The following is a description of how to conduct this exercise:

Using a camcorder and external microphone, give each student 30 seconds in front of the camera to introduce her/himself with a short autobiographical statement. Place the camera on a tripod and feed the signal into a monitor so that the students not working equipment can participate by observing. Briefly review the responsibilities of the following positions: the floor manager gives the cues (standby, roll tape, 5-4-3-2-1, action...then, using a stop watch, counts the talent down at 25 seconds); the sound operator checks the microphone and monitors the audio; the camera operator frames the shot and starts and stops the recording; and the talent introduces her/himself. Assign students to the positions. Give the talent the external microphone. Do a recording and then play it back and discuss it. Rotate all the students through the exercise having each student teach the next who takes his/her place how to work the equipment or perform the job.

Students learn from this exercise that their "natural" way of framing a shot or otherwise using the camera, and the way they naturally behave in front of a camera may not actually look "good" or "natural." Trainees watch each other's portraits critiquing how the productions look and sound. The trainer stimulates the discussion/critique by asking questions like: What do you notice about how the shots are framed? How is the sound quality? Does it make a difference how you hold the microphone? Does the talent speak to the viewer? Does it make a difference where the talent looks? Is 30 seconds enough time to get information across? How do different shots and different audio levels make you feel?

What do you remember about the portrait? (With some portraits the visual so overwhelms the aural that trainees don't remember anything the person said.)

This exercise helps students begin to identify the syntax of the television language, build their vocabulary of production terms, and think about production methods while learning to operate the equipment.

Another effective production exercise used by Ross Braver involves having trainees shoot a short, simple narrative (such as buying a soda



TVCA's Majorie Brown teaches critical viewing and hands-on production to a group of fourth graders from Tigard, Oregon.

from a soda machine) using in-camera edits. This exercise illustrates that narratives are artificial constructs which compress time and manipulate image and sound. It also forces trainees to question what's essential to the story and what needs to be left out. Braver reinforces these ideas by viewing and discussing the trainees' productions and by showing clips from commercial media.

At Davis Community Television (DCTV), I have trainees watch 10 minutes of a commercial news show. I then lead a discussion in which participants identify the con-

ventions of the program: anchors, shot types, roll-ins, peppy music. Issues of representation arise. Are the people on the news like us? Are our lives covered on the news? Is the local news local? I then stimulate discussion about sound bites, gory lead stories, editorial control and commercial breaks. Later, trainees have four hours to produce their own version of the news. Often they choose to parody or break traditional broadcast news conventions.

Editing. Editing classes are the ideal place to point out how messages are constructed through the selective ordering of images and sounds. To reinforce this concept, Braver has his classes re-edit an already-shot interview (complete with cutaways) or "junk tapes" provided by the cable company, rearranging the order of events. They then view and discuss what they've edited. Discussion centers on: the ethical choices involved in manipulating sounds and images, the power of editorial control, the ability to under/misrepresent an event or what subjects said, and how the realities constructed through editing are not "windows on the world."

Audio editing presents an opportunity to juxtapose different sound tracks. Wendy Warren in Yakima, Washington shows a clip from *Jaws* and then asks trainees to think about how the scene would feel if the music were cheerful instead.

Sally Cloninger, a professor at Evergreen State College in Olympia, teaches analysis through production. She has her students practice editing by cutting a tape that critiques the mainstream media's representation. For instance, she provides off-air copies of several TV sitcoms and asks trainees to edit the material into a critique on the representation of women.

Information Sharing. There are many people in both the community access and media arts worlds who are interested and knowledgeable about media literacy. I am currently compiling a list of access trainers who are interested and/or active in teaching media literacy. If you would like a copy of this list, or to be included on this list, please send me your name, address and a SASE. If you are an access trainer with media literacy strategies to share, please send them to me to include in future reports.

jesikah maria ross is Production & Human Resources Manager at Davis Community Television. Contact her at DCTV, 1623 Fifth Street, Suite A, Davis, CA 95616. Phone: (916) 757-2419 (o)/ (916) 757-2419 (h). Thanks to Barbara Osborn for her collaboration in conducting research for this article. Research was funded in part by the National Alliance for Media Education (NAME).

Young People Find Their Voices with The Mirror Project

By Roberto Arévalo

It seems like yesterday that I began *The Mirror Project*. I remember wandering the streets of Somerville, Massachusetts looking for teenagers who wanted to learn video production. I visited schools, parks, clubs, churches where I thought youth would congregate. Soon I had a list of boys and girls from various backgrounds. Visiting their homes was an opportunity for me to meet their parents and learn more about their environments. As a result of these visits, I decided to structure teaching sessions that would suit and stimulate their ways of thinking.

Young people are mirrors of the world around them; they clearly reflect what is going on in the household, in the educational system, in the street and in the community as a whole. They reflect what society has given them and what it has not given them. *The Mirror Project* is an opportunity offered by Somerville Community Access Television (SCAT) for youth to express themselves by using video. We want to help teenagers find their own beat.

Anderson St. Louis, a 13-year-old participant from *The Mirror Project*, took the camcorder to his cousin's room. Patrick, also 13, addresses the camera in a monologue where he mentions all the things he owns with pride. He continues, "I don't know what's up with prejudiced people....We are all on this earth, God made us, and he's straight up! To all those prejudiced people, y'all can just step. Y' all stupid... 'cause all of us just want to be friends and all...."

The uniqueness of *The Mirror Project* emerges from its approach to teaching video. The project breaks away from the rigid structures imposed by adults, and encourages young people to communicate their ideas as they choose. "When people look in the mirror they dream of being a movie star, but at *The Mirror Project* you see yourself with a camera in your hand and the skills

to use it," producer Chris Mangone wrote for the last *Mirror* screening program. *The Mirror Project* results are spontaneous stories on video that capture the world of teenagers from their point

of view. "I just wanted to show what my friends do after school," Natalia Velez responded to a question asked at a *Mirror* presentation at Harvard University.

Each session of *The Mirror Project* lasts four months and involves several stages. Initially, I meet with the teenagers, their families and teachers. This allows me to design the classes according to the needs



Anderson St. Louis works on his video, "Living Large."

ROBERTO AREVALO

of the given group of teenagers. I select a group of eight students from different ethnic backgrounds and begin a series of classes—a dialogue through which we learn about each other and about video production. Emphasis is placed on incorporating the camera into the students' lives rather than having the camera represent an intrusion into their usual activities. Field trips to museums, movies, conferences and other television stations create unity among the group, and provide additional stimuli.

Next each student videotapes an individual project. This develops the students' communication skills and gives them a sense of pride in their accomplishments. Last, a cablecast and public screening of their videos is held. The screenings are attended by the participant's families, teachers and the Haitians, Hispanics, Brazilians, Portuguese, North Americans and Africans that make up Somerville's diverse community. While this represents the closing of the formal project activities for the participants, it represents the beginning of better understanding about themselves and their community. In turn the young producers become active participants in documenting and shaping their own history.

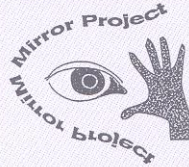
The project resources are simply a camcorder, a few microphones, access to a straight cuts editing room, and a part time staff coordinator. Since *The Mirror Project* began over a year ago, we have produced more than 30 videos.

Many of them have been presented at regional and national conventions of the Alliance for Community Media, to students and professors at Harvard University Teachers' Network, and at the Benton Foundation's 1993 Advocacy Video Conference. In addition, mainstream press and television have published stories about the project. In spite of our limited resources and the brief time the participants

have been producers, four students have won awards at the Women in the Director's Chair Festival and at the New England Film and Video Festival. Two of our students were hired by the Institute for Contemporary Arts in Boston to produce *Young Black and Malcolm*, a video that had its premiere at the Institute for Contemporary Arts last September.

Currently, I am forming a new group of students. For more information or if you would like to contribute in some way to *The Mirror Project*, please call me.

Roberto Arévalo is Youth Coordinator at Somerville Community Access Television. Contact him at SCAT, 90 Union Square, Somerville, MA 02143. Phone: (617) 628-8826.



The Mirror Project breaks away from the rigid structures imposed by adults, and encourages young people to communicate their ideas as they choose.

Young people are mirrors of the world around them; they clearly reflect what is going on in the household, in the educational system, in the street and in the community as a whole. They reflect what society has given them and what it has not given them.

Media Literacy in the Northwest

By Gloria DeGaetano and Robin Reidy

In 1992, a group of Seattle media artists, educators and cable access activists began meeting to talk about the concepts of media literacy that have emerged worldwide since the 1970s. We realized that in order to effect a significant change in our community and beyond, we needed to bring together a diverse group of interested people from the arts, education, government, and community as a whole to present the ideas and concepts of media literacy.

To this end, in April 1993, 911 Media Arts Center co-sponsored with the National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture (NAMAC) and Seattle Central Community College, one of the first national conferences on media literacy called *Teaching Media Literacy: Talk Back and Take Charge*. The conference brought together almost 200 artists, educators, parents, students, cable access producers, community leaders, and international media literacy spokespeople from Canada, Australia, and the U.S. It was a weekend of inspiring presentations, thought-provoking discussions, and renewed enthusiasm for addressing media literacy issues in our homes, schools and communities.

Out of this event came a collective expanded awareness that our existing institutions are not well-suited to effect large systematic changes relating to media literacy; the educational system will not change fast enough from within, and media arts centers are still too isolated from their larger communities. How then do we keep media literacy alive and growing within our communities? It became apparent that an organization was needed where bridge-building coalitions could be developed and where resources could be disseminated.

As Deborah Leveranz and Kathleen Tyner stated in an article about media literacy in *The Independent* (Aug/Sept 1993): "The hope for media (literacy) lies in its ability to form coalitions and alliances and to bridge divisions in the field. Support from the upper echelons of the educational bureaucracy is vital, but the center will not hold without an equal push from the grassroots that demands media education at the local level in schools, community groups, and arts programs.... It is the artists' job to team with educators to articulate a compelling vision of media education in the United States, one that provides the arena for asking the right questions and coming up with new answers in the Age of Information."

Our first answer is to establish a Northwest Media Literacy Institute (NMLI). This non-profit organization would be the site of important alliances, the arena for discussion, and the place to form our visions. Its mission would be to advocate an interactive relationship between citizens and media by providing training and media literacy resources to

artists, educators, students, parents, community groups and the general public throughout the Northwest. Initially housed and nurtured at 911 Media Arts Center, NMLI would eventually become a separate organization because of its need to operate independently as a link between the arts, education, and local communities it will serve.

Long-term goals of the NMLI include:

- providing media literacy information, including books, videos, and other materials;
- collaborating with individuals, schools, media producers, TV and radio stations, the press, government, and community groups to promote media literacy;
- sponsoring media literacy training workshops, seminars, and conferences;
- initiating and supporting media literacy research and curriculum development;
- creating an internship program for students in art, media, and education;
- creating an information and resource clearing-house for the Northwest region, including a roster of media artists and media literacy professionals to link with individuals, schools, and community groups on production, curriculum development, and advocacy;
- tapping into the national electronic database of media educators currently being created by the National Alliance for Media Education (NAME).

In its first year, NMLI would focus on establishing itself as a non-profit organization with a board of directors. The immediate community-wide need for public awareness of media literacy concepts and strategies would be given priority through collaborations with other local media activist groups such as the Foundation for Family Television and Electra (Seattle-based groups focused on quality television and electronic democracy, respectively).

Plans are also underway to provide resources to the Media Violence Project of the Snohomish County Child Safety Commission; work with Washington and Oregon cable stations to develop media literacy resources; conduct classes and seminars for educators on media literacy through 911 and Seattle Pacific University; and collaborate with the State PTA and the Washington Education Association to disseminate literacy resources to parents and teachers statewide.

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Gloria DeGaetano is director of Train of Thought Consulting. Contact her at Seattle Pacific University, PO Box 311, Redmond, WA 98073. Phone: (206) 883-1544.



"Since 1982, the amount spent on media advertising in the U.S. has doubled, jumping from \$66 billion to \$130 billion in 1990. And of that, at least \$500 is in ads aimed directly at children.... Our system of advertising purposefully promotes envy, creates anxiety, and fosters insecurity. The tragic end-product of this is kids killing kids...in order to walk in their playmates' \$100 brand sneakers."

— Ronald Collins and Michael Jacobson, Center for Science in the Public Interest and Center for the Study of Commercialism



Helping participants define the difference between citizen and consumer is an important part of Chicago Access Corporation's media literacy curriculum. These images from America's Disability Channel are discussed by students as part of their training.

Chicago Access Corporation

Reading Television to Make Change

By Greg Boozell

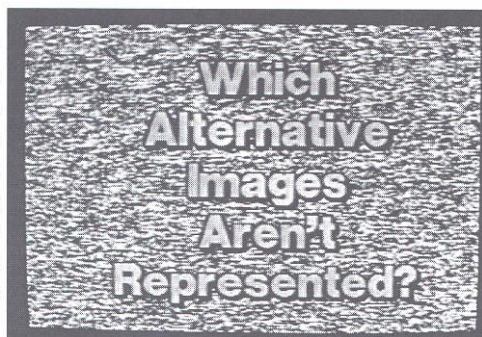
In seeking to incorporate media literacy principles into our teaching at Chicago Access Corporation, one of the first things we learned was that the term "media literacy" is defined inconsistently. Some definitions are depoliticized, with the apparent goal of creating more discriminating consumers of television programming. CAC defines media literacy as "the ability to analyze and understand media forms which includes the economic and political analyses of media institutions." This definition is politicized because our goal is to extend students' critical understanding of television.

Media literacy is taught at CAC in order to bring people to critical voice using cable television. This practice is one of self-definition and, ultimately, empowerment. Ideally, the end result is a self-defined, public citizen. Being a citizen means being able to practice agency—the ability to both understand the world and change it. In this model, free speech is framed as a means to an end, not a goal unto itself.

Given this framework, CAC's curriculum includes the following. First, the differences between mediated and immediate experiences are discussed. The idea is to emphasize that television images are representations to be interpreted and not reality. Next we discuss the political and economic ramifications of media structures and institutions. This is done primarily by defining how these structures position individuals as "consumers" rather than "citizens." In relation to this, we also teach the historical role of public access television. If access' alternative, adversarial position in relation to dominant commercial media isn't clearly understood, it is difficult to see public access as much more than a poor cousin to "real" television.

Finally, we help students understand that their own voices are legitimate. Using video, an instructor can help her or his students understand that their observations and life experiences are valuable. Not to be confused with self-congratulatory speech, or speech that reproduces the dominant cultural power relations, the voices to be legitimized are self-reflexive and critical.

As part of CAC's training, a tape is shown of outtakes from access programs that either feebly or ably imitate commercial television. After



All narratives are partial and incomplete. CAC's training challenges students to question "objectivity."

screening each segment, questions are asked of the students which raise issues of authorship, audience, intent and exclusion. The point is to raise the students' awareness of these issues and relate them to their respective video practices. Countering "broadcast clones"¹ is an important element in access training because access programs that mimic the forms of commercial television reproduce the same oppressive power relations explicit in dominant commercial media.

After reviewing all of this, the reader might presume that Chicago Access Network channels are overflowing with socially-informed, activist programs created by critically thinking Chicago citizens. While this is the goal, Chicago Access still has more than its share of narcissistic producers and broadcast clones. One reason for this is that most of the video production classes at CAC are painfully short. Limited resources are constantly weighed against the volume of people who wish to participate. As a result, the classes are necessarily abbreviated. Further, the model described here is not dictatorial; the best we can hope for is to inform the choices that the participants make.

CAC's training curriculum reflects an ongoing critical process shared among the users and staff. Our curriculum model furnishes a basis for criticism and praise of video practice. As such it is a far cry from the predominant access video training model that focuses primarily upon the operation of video equipment. Some might argue that CAC's discussions of intent and program content with access participants are unduly propagandistic and violate sacrosanct "content neutrality" principles. Of course, they need to remember that content neutrality itself is an ideological position.

¹See Higgins, John. "Night of the Broadcast Clones: The Politics of Video Training." *Community Television Review*, August 1991: 9-12. Also see "Beyond the Night of the Broadcast Clones: Visions of Empowerment, Media Literacy and Demystification." *Community Television Review*, May/June 1993: 17-19.

Greg Boozell is Program Director for Chicago Access Corporation. He is the producer of a video installation and documentary made on behalf of The Children's Burn Awareness Program in Chicago. He can be reached at CAC, 322 S. Green, Chicago, Ill. 60607. Phone: (312) 738-1400.

TV and the Growing Brain

By Gloria DeGaetano

"What do you do when you have nothing to do?" (Or think you have nothing to do?)

"Watch TV." (Anyway, what else is there to do?)

TV watching has become America's favorite pastime. It's what most of us do most of the time—it's what our children do more often than anything else. Whether providing background noise or main stage amusement, 70 percent of American families watch it while they eat dinner. Family activities like playing cards or board games or just plain old conversation have, basically, "gone down the tube."

When parents overuse TV and video, they don't think much about limiting their children's access to it. Consequently we see babies as young as six months being propped in front of the screen; two-year-olds who watch their favorite movies over and over AND OVER again without *any* adult interaction (Recently a teacher proudly told me that her 18-month-old daughter has watched *Alladin* at least 50 times!); preschoolers who daily watch children's fare and their parents' favorite soaps and cop shows. And no one talks to them about what they are watching.

By kindergarten, kids will have spent at least 5,000 hours watching TV—the time it takes an adult to earn a college degree! By the ripe age of six, most American kids have acquired the video habit so that for the next twelve years they will get their "fix" three to five hours daily. **And no one will talk to them about what they are watching.**

Is this any way to raise children?

Isolating them in front of screens not only paves the way for a life of "couch potatodom," but also adversely affects their physical, cognitive,

and emotional development. In this article I will explain how screen overuse can alter children's brain development and call attention to the urgent need for family media literacy—the need to limit children's TV viewing time, and to talk with them when they do watch.

3 Brains in 1. The human brain consists of three distinct parts acting independently of each other and interacting with each other simultaneously. The core brain, sometimes referred to as "the reptilian system," controls instinctual responses, physical coordination, and self-preservation; the limbic system or

"middle brain" controls feelings, day-dreams, intuitions; and the cerebral cortex or "higher brain" controls our ability to think, to synthesize and create, to make decisions, and to experience self-understanding.

All three areas grow rapidly in early childhood. The baby, as she learns to crawl and walk, starts development at the core brain level where the sensory-motor system is controlled. In a few years, strong feelings become evident, as any parent of a two-year can tell you, when the limbic system "kicks in." Between the ages of two to five, the child's cerebral cortex undergoes bursts of growth as language centers develop and the seeds of higher level thinking are sown.

Despite a flurry of activity in early childhood, the brain grows slowly and steadily throughout middle childhood and adolescence. During all that time, Mother Nature demands certain pre-requisites if the brain is to successfully reach its adult capacity.

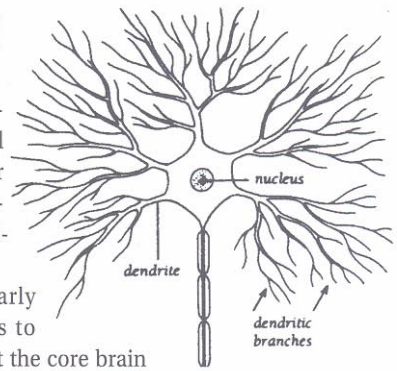
In families where overuse and misuse of video have become habitual, the child's brain is hard-pressed to grow appropriately. The necessary pre-requisites cannot be met without limiting children's access to the screen and without engaging children in the viewing process itself. Although there are several pre-requisites, I've chosen the three most important ones to examine here.

1. Brains need bodies that move. In 1988 the American Academy of Pediatrics issued a report which revealed that up to 50 percent of school-age children were not getting enough exercise to develop healthy hearts and lungs, and that 40 percent of youngsters five to eight years old exhibit

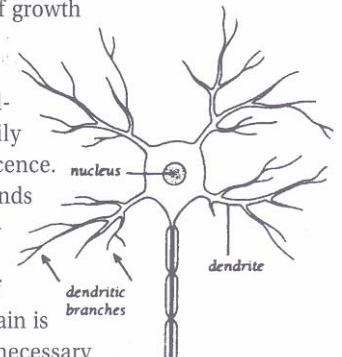
one risk factor for heart disease. Since that time the Academy has strongly encouraged parents to take more control of the TV set because over-

use of the screen frequently means

underuse of young cardiovascular systems. In addition to the obvious health benefits, physical activity in childhood builds the motor control centers in the "reptilian" brain, ensuring proper large and small muscle coordination and developing a mature sensory-motor system. This system is critical for accurately perceiving and processing input from the physical world. When little ones spend more time in front of a screen than they spend interacting with the environment around them in creative play, for



Healthy neuron with many dendrites.



Neuron with few dendrites.

Research over the past 20 years suggests that cells in the brain's cortex develop neurons with more connective links (dendrites) as a result of sustained intellectual exercise. The brain will expand and reach more of its potential in an enriched environment. Overuse of video in a child's life can negatively impact the rate and quality of brain development.

In families where overuse and misuse of video have become habitual, the child's brain is hard-pressed to grow appropriately. The necessary pre-requisites cannot be met without limiting children's access to the screen and without engaging children in the viewing process itself.

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instance, they cannot possibly get enough movement experiences for adequate development of their sensory and motor circuitry. Some of the consequences can be quite profound. For example, 30 percent of the optic nerve, the single biggest nerve in the human body, is connected to the spinal column. This fact has led many experts to believe that movement plays a critical role in the development, not only of the nerve, but also our eyesight, and later our abilities to read and to write as well.

Besides strenuous physical activity, involvement in the 3-D physical world through lots of tactile experiences, such as sand and water play, art projects, block building, cooking, crafts, and hobbies also contributes to a healthy adult sensory-motor system. Kids with a TV habit are losing opportunities for sensory-rich experiences, since images on a screen, no matter how salient and colorful, cannot foster nervous system capacities. These lost childhood opportunities are, unfortunately, irreplaceable.

2. Brains need a lot of time with language. Our current massive societal change from pencil and paper to the visual screen has been compared to the time in ancient Greece when the oral storytelling tradition was left behind in favor of the newer forms of reading and writing. In light of how the human brain functions, this analogy is not at all accurate.

The Greeks made a transition from oral language, a brain activity requiring symbolic processing, to written language, another brain activity requiring symbolic processing. Although aspects of long-term memory were lost when the oral tradition was lost, the human cerebral cortex basically stayed intact and continued to be able to master higher forms of abstract thought.

Today, as children sit passively in front of picture visuals more often than they do anything else, they are making a transition away from symbolic processing entirely. Visual images on a screen activate the reptilian and limbic systems. No mental gymnastics are required to interpret them. They arrive. They are there. Language, on the other hand, whether oral or written, requires heavy-duty thinking. Because of its symbolic form, its meaning has to be “unlocked.” Words on a computer screen are processed by the brain very differently from images on that same screen. It’s not the screens, per se, or even the visual abundance that are worrisome. It’s the filling of children’s attention with *picture* visuals and displacing time spent with symbols that’s alarming. Why? Because symbolic processing, i. e., language, is absolutely necessary to develop thinking. In fact, *there is no mind without language.*

3. Brains need mental challenges. Ever wonder why educational high-quality programs don’t draw as wide an audience as does fast paced, violent content?

Much of it has to do with how the brain functions. Fast-moving, screen violence “triggers” the reptilian and limbic systems while squelching the cerebral cortex. These “rapid-fire” images don’t give much time for the cerebral cortex to engage since it doesn’t operate as fast as the other systems. It takes time to think and to formulate ideas. Therefore, an educational television program requires more

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concentration and mental effort—especially for children because their cortical functioning is not fully developed. Fast-paced shows, on the other hand, require little mental effort—making them easier to watch (even for adults!).

But human brains rely on continual mental challenge for growth. Dr. Marian Diamond, brain researcher from the University of California, has found that the structure of cells in the brain’s cortex physically changes as a result of sustained intellectual exercise, with individual neurons developing more connective links (dendrites) to other neurons (see diagram previous page).

By allowing children unlimited access to screens while demanding less time in challenging activities, parents unintentionally contribute to a state of deprivation — seriously affecting the rate and quality of children’s brain growth. And, by not using TV and video in the home to challenge children’s thinking, we are missing golden opportunities to use the medium to support children’s cognitive development.

What to Do? Video technology **can** be child-friendly and brain compatible. First of all, children do not have to become habituated to it. By consciously **balancing other activities in children’s lives**, parents take the first step in teaching what it means to be “media literate”—using media appropriately for personal intention, rather than out of sheer habit. Other steps parents can take include:

- Talk with children about screen images and their purposes. Parents can set up challenging brain experiences by asking spontaneous questions while the family watches TV. They can elicit critical thinking by teaching children to make sound decisions about when and what they’ll watch.

- Encourage children to take television into their own hands by participating in “hands on” learning through their local public access television facility. Better yet, parents can join their children in learning television production and developing their own television program for the local cable access channel.

In short, parents can put video technology in its proper place in the family—in support of the needs of the developing child. In doing so, parents can make enormous strides in nurturing LITERACY — both language **and** media literacy.

Gloria DeGaetano, M.Ed., has more than 20 years of experience in public education. As the director of Train of Thought Consulting, she conducts classes for educators, publishes the Media MessAge newsletter and makes presentations to parent groups about the impact of video technology on child development. This article was adapted from her book, Television and the Lives of our Children: A Manual for Teachers and Parents.

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The Billerica Initiative Brings Media Literacy to Middle School

By Renee Hobbs

There are few topics which make for more stimulating discussion among teachers than the topic of "Channel One" and the larger issue of the commercialization of culture. Although teachers have a fair amount of control over the choice of materials they use in the classroom, teachers in more than 350,000 classrooms across the United States have little control over the content or form of a news program that is delivered into homerooms each morning by the Whittle Educational Network, "Channel One." Yet teachers in Billerica, Massachusetts are discovering that "Channel One" can represent an opportunity to help their students learn new ways of thinking about visual media, about the news, and about the process of creating messages that convey meaning.

Billerica was one of the first sites in the nation to receive "Channel One," a commercially supported current events program for teens which includes two minutes of advertising. "Channel One" is now in place in more than 12,000 schools which receive television equipment for use in classrooms in exchange for daily broadcast of the program.

In Billerica, "Channel One" is paired with media literacy in-service training opportunities for teachers. Media literacy is integrated across the curriculum into subject areas including language arts, social studies, science, math and the creative arts.

Unlike other media literacy efforts, which have often been solely at the initiative of an individual teacher, this effort is coordinated and supported at the district level and by members of the Billerica School Committee. In addition, this effort recognizes that teachers need support, time and training in order to 1) gain new skills in teaching and learning to use media tools effectively as resources; 2) integrate media literacy concepts into a curriculum which is appropriate to their students, their own interests and the demands of their subject areas; and 3) gain new skills in analyzing and producing messages in a variety of forms, using video, photography, graphics, text, computers, radio and other forms.

The Nation's First Master's Degree in Media Literacy. After intense involvement in staff development and curriculum in media literacy for more than a year, the Billerica Public Schools announced in October a new field-based Master's Program in Media Literacy, supported by Fitchburg State College and the Merrimack Education Center. The Master's Program will nurture participating teachers from across the district in a series of 12 30-hour courses designed to develop their expertise in media analysis, media production and critical pedagogy. Taught by

faculty members from Babson College, Boston University, Emerson College and media professionals, the Master's Degree program is intended to provide a model of systematic staff development in order to prepare teachers to teach other teachers how to integrate media literacy concepts into existing subject areas. Thirty teachers from grades K-12 are now enrolled in the program, taking two courses during the Fall 1993 semester: "Analysis of Advertising" and "Introduction to Media Literacy."

Using "Channel One" to Develop a Critical Discourse about Television. "Channel One" as a phenomenon is itself an excellent object lesson on each of the key concepts of media literacy. As a news program, "Channel One" constructs reality each day by making choices about what is most newsworthy for teenage and preadolescent viewers. Forced by the constraints of time and concerns about the attention and knowledge base of the audience to emphasize some issues and ignore others, the producers of "Channel One" create a product that presents a constructed version of daily events across the nation and around the world. The commercial imperative which drives "Channel One" financially is the \$600,000 which the company receives for each day's advertising messages, which reach more than 7 million young people. The following activities represent a sample of activities and discussions which were used in Billerica to connect media literacy concepts to the daily viewing of "Channel One":

➤ **Comparing 'Channel One' to Other News Sources.** Bring a current newspaper, magazine or a videotape of network news to compare with an episode of "Channel One." Ask: Why are they different? What are the constraints and limitations each producer is working under?

➤ **Exploring the Representation of Authority.** Ask students to list the techniques used in "Channel One" which promote young people as authorities. Some of these techniques include the identification of student's names when they are interviewed; the use of teen anchors; the theme that teens have particular insight on social issues and themes, etc. Ask: What are the techniques used by local and network news in their portrayal of young people? When are young people seen on local news programs? How does the representation of teens on television both reflect social reality and shape social reality?

➤ **Music, Attention and Emotion.** Ask students to make a list of the different uses of music throughout the "Channel One" broadcast, both in the news



"Channel One," resented by some teachers, tolerated by others, enjoyed by many, stands in hundreds of thousands of classrooms as an important opportunity to function as an object of analysis. Critically watching the program can help young people develop sophisticated skills of analysis, observation and communication.

— Renee Hobbs

continued on page 19

Toward a Media Wise Society

By Marieli Rowe

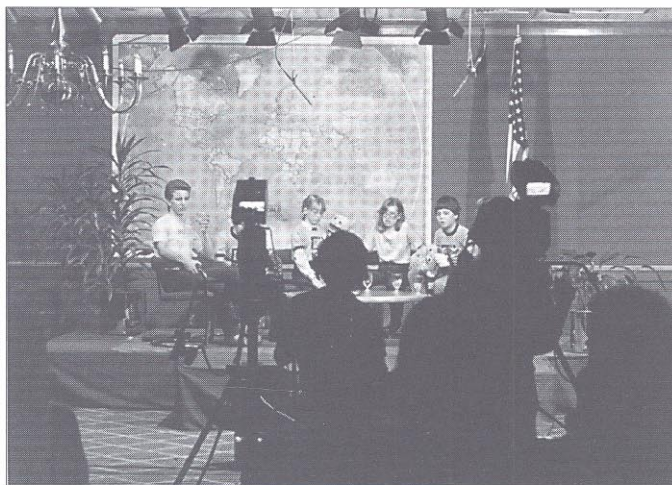
"Before he retired from Teachers College last year, Lyman Bryson talked about the mass media to a group of young English teachers who were getting ready to go to their first jobs. His talk ended on this note: 'I would like to make a prophecy: that the third or fourth or fifth generation of teachers from this present one is going to think about these new instruments of communication the way you now think of print.'"

Reported in "On Teaching Evaluation of Radio and Television" from a Better Broadcast Newsletter (the predecessor to Telemedium) circa 1955.

The National Telemedia Council (NTC), based in Madison, Wisconsin, has literally spanned the generations of telecommunications. Embedded in our history is the history of the media literacy education movement in the United States.

This year, NTC celebrates its 40th year of promoting media literacy, or critical TV viewing skills, in children and youth. We are a national, non-profit membership organization working mainly with teachers, parents and other caregivers. Our agenda is full for the 1990's with the continued quarterly release of our flagship publication, *Telemedium*; workshops; conferences; teaching aids; resource materials and our long-range enterprise: The Media Literacy Clearinghouse and Center.

Media Literacy Pioneers. The oldest national organization to embrace the concept of media education, NTC originated early in the 1930's in response to growing concerns about the impact of the media. At that time, television was in experimental development while radio captured popular interest. Among those who voiced concern were forward-looking English teachers, university scholars and several early educational broadcasting visionaries. While they shared the concern about the impact of media, they rejected the negative tactics often used by



In 1981, NTC organized the first international children's demonstration of live interactive TV. "Kids Meet Across Space" made use of satellite technology and allowed children in the Washington, DC and Brisbane, Australia to interact.

media watchdogs. Rather, they embraced a philosophy that valued reflective education, positive attitudes and cooperation instead of confrontation with the broadcast industry.

In Madison, Wisconsin, a small group of English teachers who were part of the local chapter of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) formed a study committee on radio evaluation. Its purpose was to develop awareness, criteria for evaluation, appreciation of quality programming, and a responsive audience. The group produced a monthly "Good Listening" list of "some good radio programs," and other listening "helps." The idea grew to a statewide level, and garnered enough support nationally to become a national council in 1953.

From Radio to Television.

With television's arrival on the scene, the new organization was founded as the American Council for Better Broadcasts. The Council brought together individuals and organizations, teachers and parents, lay persons and professionals, to create a network of aware media users and to work with the broadcasting industry rather than against it. It spearheaded activity through its long-running *Look-Listen-*

Opinion-Poll, a school and home project designed to raise awareness and stimulate critical viewing and interest in active participation. *Look-Listen* was a qualitative evaluation which asked people to evaluate programs and give thoughtful reasons for their ratings. It served as a stimulus for critical awareness of TV content and provided teachers with a hands-on project to introduce critical thinking about the media in the classroom.

Over the years, the Council initiated numerous media literacy ideas: annual conferences and workshops; a weekly newspaper column and a radio program, "Broadcast on Broadcasts," which ran weekly on the statewide educational radio network; summer teacher courses; and the still-running children's cable channel "KIDS-4." In 1981 the Council organized an electronic "first"—an international children's demonstration of live interactive TV via satellite. Our 30th anniversary saw the arrival of new technologies such as cable TV, the VCR and the personal com-

"I would like to make a prophecy: that the third or fourth or fifth generation of teachers from this present one is going to think about these new instruments of communication the way you now think of print."

— Professor Lyman Bryson, 1955

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puter, further expanding our choices and horizons. In step with the emergence of these important technological changes, we became The National Telemedia Council.

Building a Media Literacy Movement.

In the decade that followed, NTC turned its focus on efforts to contribute to the development of a meaningful "media literacy movement": *Telemedium* became our mouthpiece; annual conferences featured the "media-wise society" theme;

our Sponsor Recognition Awards championed media literacy projects. We experimented with an interactive cable project; and through *Look-Listen*, we found dozens of outstanding media literacy teachers. Wherever possible, we found allies.

But progress was not systematic and was often a matter of luck. Therefore, finding ourselves at the beginning of the 1990s and, realizing the need for a stronger, more-unified vision, NTC leadership undertook the in-depth process of reassessment of its function as an organization. Our conclusion was that, given the broad-based educational expertise among our membership, and the enormous technical and intellectual support available locally through the University of Wisconsin campus, our most important mandate would be to exist as a networking organization.

With this understanding clearly articulated, we launched the NTC Clearinghouse and Center, our all-out effort to put our finger on the pulse of media education in this country through the electronic tracking of the wealth of human and bibliographic resources available in the field. Standing at the heart of the

Clearinghouse is a computerized database system which has been designed to catalogue information on people, organizations, periodicals, and teaching materials. When completed, it will enable educators to find media literacy-related curricula, lesson plans, and support materials; books, magazines, articles and videotapes; and lists of organizations, conferences, and educators in their area. The

goal of this information-gathering is to provide media educators with the knowledge they need to engage in the type of networking so crucial to the growth of any grassroots educational movement.

An important dimension of the Clearinghouse project is a collaboration with the National Alliance for Media Education (NAME) to create a published directory of media educators around the U.S. The directory project marks a convergence of media literacy education and media arts education—two educational movements sharing a vision for the critical analysis of media and the emergence of positive voices to shape the future of a global media society.

As we stand at the edge of the fifth decade of our organization, we are encouraged by a renewed sense that media literacy is still the overriding need for the children of the media age. When it is estab-

lished, as predicted in the 1955 address by Lyman Bryson, that our concept of "literacy" includes all communications media, our goal will have been accomplished.

Marieli Rowe is Executive Director of the National Telemedia Council. She can be reached at NTC, 120 E. Wilson St., Madison, WI, 53703. Phone: (608) 257-7712.

Billerica Initiative

continued from page 21

and in advertising messages. Ask: what types of music are used? What are the functions of music in the program? How is rhythm used to gain students' attention or make transitions? What are the similarities and differences between the use of music in the news and the use of music in advertising?

► **The Myth of the Ideal in "Channel One".** "Channel One" makes repeated use of the concept of 'ideals' in its broadcasts. Have students look up the meaning of the word 'ideal' and then watch a broadcast, writing down all the representations which have some dimension of 'idealness' in both the news and advertising content. Examples of the 'ideal' in news might be found in a feature news story on courageous teens in the now dissolving Soviet Union, or teens who formed their own business to help the handicapped. In advertising, 'ideals' are plentiful in the representation of teen lifestyles, fashions, relationships and possessions. Discuss: What kinds of news stories or advertising messages would never be seen on "Channel One"?

It is obvious that each of these activities could be adapted to analyze almost any type of "text" imaginable, from poetry to sit coms to billboards. Yet teachers, like the rest of the American public, have been actively engaged in a lifelong process of not taking mass media or popular culture messages seriously for almost 100 years. "Channel One," resented by some teachers, tolerated by others, enjoyed by many, stands in hundreds of thousands of classrooms as an important opportunity to function as an object of analysis. Critically watching the program can help young people develop sophisticated skills of analysis, observation and communication. When used only for its value in conveying message content, it could threaten the integrity of a school's curriculum by setting the agenda for the content of classroom discourse. But when used as a text to analyze, "Channel One" can be a worthwhile vehicle to inspire students to watch, read and listen with heightened awareness and sensitivity; to help make connections between the classroom and the community and the culture; and to better prepare students to effectively manage life in the age of information.

Renee Hobbs is Associate Professor of Communication at Babson College and the Director of the Institute on Media Education at Harvard University. For more information about the Billerica Initiative, contact Dr. John Katsoulis at (508) 436-9500.

GOOD LISTENING

Monthly List of Programs and News of Radio, Television, First Published in 1955
April, 1952

"Better Listening, Better World"

Wisconsin Association For Better Radio and Television

RADIO-TELEVISION CONFERENCE

April 26, Madison Woman's Club, 240 W. Gilman

Pre-Conference Dinner-Discussion
St. Bernard's Parish Hall, 2450 Atwood Ave.
Members, expected—Others interested, invited
to Dinner and Conference.
Details on Last Page

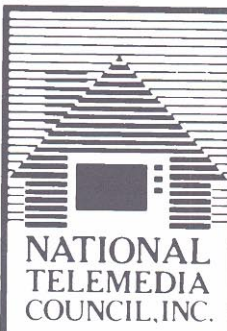
COMMERCIALS and CONVENTIONS

The advertisement with column, or pointed out. Broadcasters responsible paper's column, no control sponsor, content a he pays fully to Hurst ex- tical of firms. I vising ti casting public a should s private

Jack ... months ago, vigorously criticized the financing of convention broadcasts by commercial firms.

Gilbert Seldes, too Gilbert Seldes is also concerned about this commercial sponsorship ("Saturday Review of Literature," March 15). And he mentions a further development. "Since campaign coverage will bring the networks from one to three million dollars," he asks, "was it necessary to break the tradition of giving free time for political discussion before the nominating conventions? Two networks have already done this."

He points out that highly prejudicial action in a convention can be partially faked and sent out to the country. "A great tradition is dead," he says, and marvels at the apathy of the public, confronted by such a condition. He believes the public think about the implications and find ways to express itself.



**NATIONAL
TELEMEDIA
COUNCIL, INC.**

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The Information Highway

By Herbert I. Schiller

An entirely new electronic environment—industrial and individual, factory and household—is being created at an astonishing speed. Who will own it? Who will direct it? Who will utilize it? Who will benefit from it? The evidence of the construction scaffolding is everywhere. The answers to these questions are less easy to find.

"Information technology has penetrated every corner of the U.S. economy," *Business Week* recently concluded, adding that, "throughout the 1980's, U.S. business invested a staggering \$1 trillion in information technology." These expenditures increased productivity in manufacturing, services and retail activity.

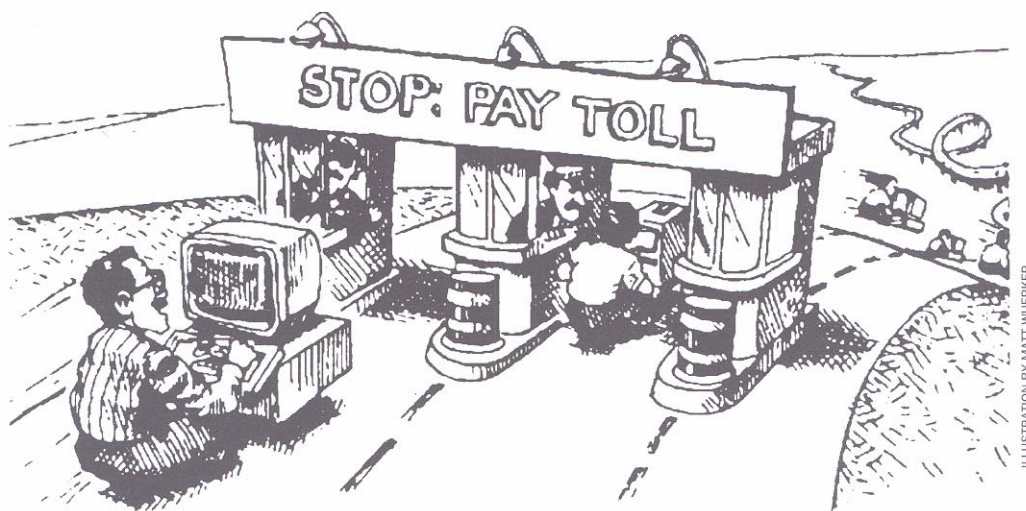
The electronics, film, TV, cable and information industries have now decided that it is time for the general public to experience firsthand—at our own expense, to be sure—the new electronics. President Clinton and Vice President Gore view the coming efforts to hook up homes as well as workplaces electronically as "a historical turning point" in the capability to "move ideas, data and images around the country and around the world." Gore sees this development as "by all odds the most important and lucrative marketplace of the 21st century."

Another booster is Apple Computer's (former) chairman, John Sculley. He estimates that the revenue that will be generated by the merging of television, telecommunications, computers, consumer electronics, publishing and information services into a single interactive information industry could reach \$3.5 trillion worldwide by the year 2001.

The almost daily reports of gigantic deals, mergers, industry crossover combinations and announcements of government approval confirm that a social transformation of truly epic proportions is under way. Promoted by a variety of high-tech electronic interests, it is being thrust, want it or not, need it or not, on the people and the economy.

This development represents far more than routine corporate restructuring, industrial realignment or familiar patterns of industrial concentration, though all this is happening as well. What is rapidly taking shape beyond this is an electronically organized total environment that encompasses individual, household, business and work practices in their totality. Its major components will be the information highway and the new electronic gadgets that will feed into it. Some features of this electronically administered social space are already discernible.

It will be an almost exclusively privatized social landscape. The public and the public's interest, if not entirely excluded from consideration, will at best be given marginal attention. In fact, what was once the public sector is on the way to extinction. The deals are between



giant companies. Government intervention, when present, occurs only to reconcile divergent corporate interests or to provide subsidies for projects not yet commercially viable. With respect to high definition television, for example, the Federal Communications Commission has been "prodding the rivals to bury their differences and form an alliance," according to a report by Edmund Andrews in the *New York Times*.

The privatization of the electronic economy is well under way. The Clinton Administration's 1994 budget bill includes an unprecedented proposal to sell frequencies of the radio spectrum, a unique natural (and national) resource. Today, Democrats and Republicans alike strongly support selling part of the spectrum, justifying it as a fundraiser and estimating that as much as \$7.2 billion may be realized from the auction. Under this reasoning, why not put the Great Lakes, the Rocky Mountains and the national parks on the block?

The proposed sell-off of public property is being extended to the existing national electronic network. An important part of the Clinton Administration's program has been to call for a National Information Infrastructure, which is intended to link every business, home, school and college in a communications network. Such a network, at least in partial form, is operating as the Internet.

The Internet, established with government funds in 1969 and now serving, at minimal cost, up to 30 million computer hands, is performing some of the work that the Administration claims it wants to have expanded. The Net is currently handling scientific communication, some data transmission, bibliographic material and electronic mail. An upgraded national electronic network will have the capacity to transmit far greater amounts of material (including television and film) more rapidly and with interactive service, allowing the receivers/viewers to make choices and selections.

The Internet could be the basis of a free social information facility in the electronic era, yet it is being divested of its public character. Administration-approved proposals to privatize the Internet are moving through Congress. Some see privatization of the Internet as a threat to the continued availability of the network at reasonable cost to educational users. A vice president of EDUCOM (a communication

consortium of colleges and universities) observes: "There's entirely too much willingness on the part of the National Science foundation to throw the whole business over to the commercial marketplace before fundamental issues have been addressed."

The genesis and likely fate of the Internet represent a familiar sequence, repeated throughout U.S. industrial history. The corporate sector has invariably relied on the government to finance and develop new undertakings that are risky, require substantial investment and may not become economically viable for a long time. Once the project is a profit-maker, it is appropriated by the self-styled "risk takers."

Of course, the development of the Internet as a publicly supported enterprise would dim corporate expectations for commercial exploitation. An article in *Time* put it this way: "That shape the [national information] highway takes will depend to some extent on who ends up building it." But it is not only a question of building the highway, profitable as that will be. What is transported over the highway is an equally crucial issue. On this point the cable operators, phone companies, computer makers and broadcasters are all agreed. Although they are battling to achieve their cut of the traffic on the highway, they are unanimous in seeking to exclude the public's participation and interest.

The profits to be made from control of the highway are enormous. This explains the frenzied corporate wheeling and dealing to establish technological and financial advantage. The most immediate payoff will be the sales of new household electronic equipment that will be needed to receive high definition TV and the new interactive systems, which will be coming on the market in a year or two. Prices will decline rapidly as production increases, but still, 90 million or more is a juicy market for consumer electronics companies. One kind of expertise American enterprise has not fallen behind in is the ability to induce the public to believe that existing equipment is obsolete. Color TV easily displaced black and white sets. Music has been delivered by records, cassettes and CD's, each time necessitating the discard of existing equipment and new consumer outlays of billions of dollars.

In the long run, however, hardware sales will be dwarfed by the golden flows that will be extracted from the viewing public for the shows, games, films and specialized data that will be transmitted. Private ownership of the electronic highway confers the right to determine who and what will be given access. Much like shopping malls, in which store sites are offered on the basis of the likely revenues the establishment will generate, future transmissions will be determined by commercial criteria.

While the electronics and cable companies and their publicists claim, for example, that interactive TV heralds the arrival of viewer participation and autonomy, already announced plans for the new services belie this promise. Most of the interactivity, in a corporate-owned and sponsor-supported system,

will inevitably be directed to the future invasion of the home with marketing messages. Already, Home Shopping Network and QVC (Quality, Value and Convenience) are out there, and other claimants for the touted 500 channels that fiber-optic cable can provide are rapidly emerging. *Broadcasting and Cable* magazine lists some of the new network offerings waiting in the wings: Advertising Television (five-to-ten-minute infomercials with no direct response), the Crime Channel, the Game Channel, the Game Show Channel, the Gaming Network, the Golf Channel, the Military Channel, Television Food Network and lots more.

Macy's chairman and chief executive, Myron Ullman, while announcing the start of a cable television channel in the fall of 1994, offers this exciting prospect: "TV Macy's will be a 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week department store in your living room." And Joan Rivers, who hosts her own shopping program, calls television "today's talking catalogue." Can K-Mart, Wal-Mart, Bloomingdale's, Sears, Merrill Lynch, Home Depot et al. be far behind? Can our living rooms, much less our minds, handle such a crowd?

And if electronic shopping momentarily fatigues, there will be an endless choice of sports channels owned by entertainment superconglomerates. These programs will serve a dual function. The more visible the player or the team, the greater the sales of the clothes, toys and sundry items fashioned in the likeness of the individual or the franchise's logo. These items will be produced by, and advertised on, the shopping channel. This totalizing experience, which will be controlled by a few communications supercorporations, is called "synergy" in management lingo. When working well, it delivers a distracted and numbed viewer, a most suitable participant in the "free" market.

Could it be otherwise? Do the new electronics products and the advanced information technology have to serve only the ends of marketing and pacification? They will, until a way is found to bring the public and the public interest into the decision-making process.

— Herbert L. Schiller, "The 'Information Highway': Public Way or Private Road?". *The Nation* magazine, July 12, 1993. (c) 1993 *The Nation Company, Inc.* Reprinted with permission. *The Nation* is available by subscription @ \$48/yr (47 issues), 72 Fifth Avenue, Box P, New York, NY 10011.

Herbert I. Schiller is author of several books including an updated edition of *Mass Communications and American Empire* (Westview). He is co-author with George Gerber and Hamid Mawanu of *Triumph of the Image: The Media's War in the Persian Gulf* (Westview). Schiller is Emeritus Professor of Communication at the University of California. Contact him at the University of California, San Diego, Department of Communication, La Jolla, CA 92093. Phone: (619) 534-3572.



It will be an almost exclusively privatized social landscape. The public and the public's interest, if not entirely excluded from consideration, will at best be given marginal attention. In fact, what was once the public sector is on the way to extinction. The deals are between giant companies.

— Herb Schiller

Center for Media and Values Plans to "Reinvent"

By Elizabeth Thoman

Let's stop talking about media literacy," said Center for Media and Values staffer Jay Dover one day not long ago at a staff meeting. "And let's do more of it." Thus began a process to "reinvent" the Los Angeles-based Center for Media and Values as part of reviewing the past five years and planning for the next five.

Well known for its popular magazine, *Media & Values*, the Center has, in recent years, expanded each thematic issue of the magazine into innovative Media Literacy Workshop Kits™. The kits are a collection of teacher-friendly curriculum units with reproducible handout masters and occasionally a video on such themes as sexism in the media, how to watch the news, countering tobacco/alcohol ads, analyzing the Gulf War, media and democracy and several others. The kits are effective springboards to "get the hang" of how to lead groups through critical analysis on complex and sometimes volatile media issues.

Currently the Center is engaged in developing its most challenging kit — a media literacy approach to violence in the media. Following up the publication of two consecutive issues of *Media & Values*: "Media and Violence, Part I: Making the Connections" and "Part II: Searching for Solutions," the Center is currently writing a 5-part leader's guide with activities for groups of caregivers and parents of young children, elementary, middle-school and secondary students as well as adult groups. Funding is still being sought for video components to accompany the print guides. The anticipated completion date for *Beyond Blame: Countering Violence in the Media* is March, 1994.

These will be the last issues of *Media & Values* magazine as it currently exists. Although the magazine has served well as a cornerstone component of each Workshop Kit, the cost of sustaining a quarterly publication of that quality is just no longer possible. Plus, what seems to be needed in the media literacy movement now is a national publication that does media literacy, not just talks about it.

So in early 1994 look for a "new and improved" *Media & Values*. It

may even have a different name. Plans are to create a more fluid publication that will include substantive articles about current media trends (a media literacy analysis of *Beavis and Butt-head*, for instance or the Information Super Highway); timely columns by media literacy leaders; a "Parent's Page" of media literacy activities for the home, and production tips and reports from teachers and leaders in the field. There will also be "issue updates" on various media issue fronts — tobacco/alcohol ads, the Children's Television Act, the depiction of women and minorities — with action ideas for getting involved.

Improved technological capacity also offers new opportunities for expanding the reach of the Center's editorial work through electronic networks and bulletin boards, fax networks, syndicated columns and articles, media interviews and talk shows. It won't be long before the Center's membership forms contain a space for e-mail addresses!

Public access producers, along with many others in the burgeoning media literacy field, should find a wealth of connections in the Center's new publication. As we explore the details of this "reinvention," we invite your suggestions and recommendations. We'd like to hear about your success stories and to expand the market for video products created by your centers and studios. We'll be looking for writers who can explain production pointers and model community access programs that incorporate media literacy. With everyone's help, perhaps we can also "reinvent" the field of media literacy into the major national movement it deserves to be.

Elizabeth Thoman is executive director of the Center for Media and Values and the founding editor of *Media & Values Magazine*. Contact her at the Center for Media and Values, 1962 S. Shenandoah, Los Angeles, CA, 90034. Phone: (310) 559-2944.

Contact the Center to request a free catalog describing the complete collection of Media Literacy Workshop Kits™.



1 *Teaching the Media* by Len Masterman is the definitive work on media education. It connects the need for media education with the future of democracy. Why teach the mass media? How? What are the essential elements of a media education curriculum? Any teacher considering a course or course element on mass media should read this book. Comedia Books, 1985.

2 *The Media Monopoly* by Ben Bagdikian. The classic analysis of the economics of the media industry and how more and more media properties are being concentrated in the hands of fewer and fewer. Also reveals the interlocking directorates between the media industry and other corporations and power-brokers. Beacon Press, Boston. (Recently updated.)

3 *World Families Watch Television* edited by James Lull, is a fascinating review of research from around the world on how families integrate television into their everyday life and culture. Sage Publications, 1988.

16 BEST BOOKS ON TELEVISION, MASS MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS

4/5 *Inside Prime Time* (Pantheon Books, 1983) and *The Whole World is Watching* (University of California Press, 1980), by Todd Gitlin, are classics. Gitlin is one of the most astute and thoughtful commentators on the social impact of television.

6 *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior* is an original and engaging theory of how mass media as upset the social appercept by

blurring all of our traditional age, gender and authority distinctions. Thoughtful and controversial. Oxford University Press, 1985.

7 *Television/The Critical View*, edited by Horace Newcomb is the 'compleat reader' on all aspects of television productions and programming. Now in its fourth edition, it contains classic short essays and criticism from some of the best writers in the media field. Oxford University Press, 1987.

8 *The Looking Glass World of Non-fiction Television* by Elayne Rapping looks at news, documentaries, game shows, magazine and talk shows in a thoroughly engaging style. Contains many original insights about how television impacts everyday social reality. South End Press, Boston, 1987.

9 *The Cult of Information* by Theodore Roszak is subtitled "The Folklore of Computers and the True Art of Thinking" and offers a creative perspective

on what computers can and cannot do. Well-written, amusing in parts and thoroughly inspiring. Pantheon Books, 1986.

10 In *Media: The Second God*, America's "electronic guru," Tony Schwartz, picks up where his friend McLuhan left off: shattering myths, breaking new ground, mesmerizing us with his humorous and pointed insights. Indispensable. Doubleday, 1983.

11/12 *Advertising, the Uneasy Persuasion* (Basic Books, 1986) and *Reading the News* (with Robert Karl Manoff, Pantheon, 1987), by Michael Schudson are two books by an author whose work is well-written, stimulating and original.

13 *Mythmakers: Gospel, Culture and Media* by William F. Fore. A penetrating analysis of the values and cultural significance of media in our society today. Readable and provocative. Friendship Press, New York, 1990.

14 *The Media Lab: Inventing the Future at M.I.T.* is an inside report on the convergence of computers, electronic media and everyday life. Much more than a dazzling description of a high-tech future, author Stewart Brand considers emerging issues related to quality of life and humanism through machines. Penguin Books, 1988.

15 *Super Media* by Michael Real addresses the cultural meaning of media "events" like the Olympics, the Academy Awards or even the Cosby Show and makes connections to the political/economic interests that influence their audiences — us. Sage, 1989.

16 Michael Parenti's *Inventing Reality: The Politics of the Mass Media* critiques the media's distorted coverage of social and political issues that creates for the public an "invented reality." Popular and passionate in both approach and analysis. St. Martin's Press, New York, 1986.

Selected by Elizabeth Thoman and reprinted with permission from Media & Values Magazine, a publication of the Center for Media and Values. Contact your local bookstore for ordering information.

Culture Jamming with The Media Foundation

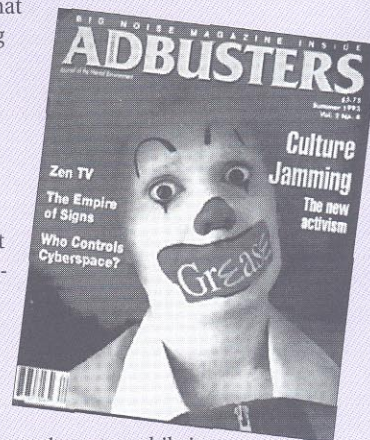
The current teaching of media literacy reinforces the great divide between passive consumers of media products and the empowered producers of media products," says The Media Foundation's Kalle Lasn. The Foundation, best known for its provocative quarterly magazine, Adbusters, is "trying to bridge the divide and get out into the mental environment."

In each issue, Adbusters takes on trans-national corporations with thoughtful articles and skillfully executed "subvertisements" — spoof ads that closely resemble the originals. Recently, the winning entry in a "Bad ADitude Ad Contest" was featured: a re-make of the Calvin Klein "Obsession for Men" cologne ad. Beneath the headline, "Recession for Men," a homeless man in tattered clothing appears instead of the handsome and impeccably groomed male model seen in the Calvin Klein version.

Founded in 1989 as a media watchdog and activist organization, The Media Foundation began publishing Adbusters magazine after broadcasters refused to sell the group air time for its sophisticated "anti-ads." The Foundation now distributes a number of "anti-ads" to activists who can secure broadcast (or cablecast) time. The spots challenge excessive consumption in "American Excess"; oppose reliance on the automobile in "Autosaurus" and discourage TV addiction in "Snap Out of it America."

Co-opting the whole commercial media culture is The Media Foundation's goal. Involving young people is key to the group's activist approach to media literacy. "Teenagers swim in the media environment all the time," Lasn says. "What's needed is to show them how to make the leap from passive consumer to active participant."

— Paula Manley



Available from The Media Foundation

► Adbusters, Journal of the Mental Environment

"The battle for your mind has just begun." Subscriptions (4 issues) \$16 for individuals and \$32 for schools and institutions.

► The Media Literacy Kit

Includes ad parodies, lesson plans, and discussion starters on topics like the beauty myth, the music industry and media manipulation. Designed for the high school classroom, the kit includes a video, Explore Your Mental Environment, that gives students the ins and outs of buying 30 seconds of airtime at a TV station for a cause they collectively believe in. \$95. Available later this year.

► The Culture Jammer's Video

Twelve minutes of inspiring "anti-ads" — uncommercials that challenge the consumer culture on subjects ranging from clear cutting old growth forests to TV violence. Includes "American Excess," "Autosaurus" and "Snap Out of it America" (which was refused by all three U.S. networks). \$25.

► Culture Jammer's BBS

"A growing band of artists, activists and environmentalists wants to throw a monkey wrench into the North American image factory....Like the first environmentalists 20 years before, who challenged the whaling ships and logging companies, culture jammers today find themselves at the forefront of a growing movement to save our most precious resource — the clarity of our own minds."

Log on: (604) 737-8537

Contact:

The Media Foundation
1243 West 7th Avenue
Vancouver B.C., V6H 1B7 Canada
Phone: (604) 736-9401

Selected Media Literacy Resources

ORGANIZATIONS

International Association for Media Literacy

40 McArthur Street
Weston, Ontario M9P 3M7
Canada
(416) 394-6992

Australian Teacher of Media (ATOM)

P.O. Box 204
Albert Park, Victoria 3206
Australia
03-525-5302

British Film Institute

Media Education Department
21 Stephen Street
London W1P 1PI England
071-255-1444

U.S. Center for Media and Values

1962 S. Shenandoah
Los Angeles, CA 90034
(310) 559-2944

An educational membership organization. Develops media literacy kits for use in schools and community settings. See related article, p. 22.

Center for Media Education

1012 Heather Ave.
Takoma Park, MD 20912
(301) 270-3938.

Provides consultation and research information on media legislative and regulatory issues.

Citizens for Media Literacy

34 Wall Street, Suite 407
Asheville, NC 28801
(704) 255-0182

Links media literacy with the concepts and practices of citizenship. Provides audiotapes, videos and publications.

Media Watch

P.O. Box 618
Santa Cruz, CA 95061
(408) 423-6355

Dedicated to improving the image of women in the media. Monitors mass media treatment of women; develops videos and other educational materials.

Media Working Group

816 Greer Street
Covington, KY 41011
(606) 581-0033

Provides media education, production training and curriculum

design in schools and community settings.

National Telemedia Council

120 E. Wilson Street
Madison, WI 53703
(608) 257-7712

Promotes media literacy for children and youth through working with teachers, parents and other caregivers. See related article, p. 18.

National Alliance for Media Education (NAME)

c/o the National Alliance for Media Arts & Culture (NAMAC)
655 13th Street, Suite 20
Oakland, CA 94612
(510) 451-2717

NAME is a strategic umbrella promoting literacy and fluency in all forms of communication for a diverse public. NAME is currently developing (with NTC) a comprehensive directory of media education practitioners, programs, research, curricula, publications and tapes.

NAMAC is a national association of organizations and individuals committed to furthering diversity and participation in all forms of the media arts, including film, video, audio and multimedia.

Strategies for Media Literacy

1095 Market Street, Suite 617
San Francisco, CA 94103
(415) 621-2911

Promotes media literacy in the U.S. beginning in elementary schools, provides teacher training and materials, operates a Media Literacy BBS: (415) 621-5156.

PUBLICATIONS

Media Literacy Resource Directory

A listing of books, curriculum materials, and videos. Available from the Center for Media and Values. \$2.50.

Adubusters Quarterly

Quarterly magazine of The Media Foundation (see p.23.)

MAIN

Newsletter of media artists and media arts centers. NAMAC membership/subscription: individual \$30; institutional \$50 and up.

Media MessAge

A newsletter for parents from Train of Thought, Inc., 6409 152nd Ave. NE, Redmond, WA 98052; (206) 883-1544, \$15/year.

Media & Values

Center for Media and Values membership/subscription: individual: \$30; organizational: \$95.

Strategies

Newsletter of Strategies for Media Literacy; \$15/year for teachers; \$30 for organizations.

Telemedium, The Journal of Media Literacy

Journal of the National Telemedia Council; \$20/year.

VIDEOS

Color Adjustment (1991), 87 min., \$250; and **Ethnic Notions** (1987), 56 min., \$295; from Black America Emerges series.

California Newsreel, 149 Ninth Street, #420, San Francisco, CA 94603; (415) 621-6196. Analyzes past and present stereotyping of African-Americans in media, especially film and television.

Dreamworlds: Desire/Sex/Power in Rock Videos

(1991), by Sut Jhally. 60 min. Foundation for Media Education, P.O. Box 2008, Amherst, MA 01004-2008; \$100. Not recommended for use with students under 18 due to graphic sexual violence.

Don't Be a TV: Television

Victim (1993), 18 min. Geared for middle school youth. Includes segments on: Media Ownership, the News, Advertising, Gender Stereotypes, Media Violence and Things You Can Do. \$75 for institutions, \$40 for individuals. Available from Media Watch.

In Other Words: The Struggle Over Language

examines language as a means of promoting intolerance by use of labels such as "terrorist" and "pornography," and looks at language as a tool of resistance using examples from Spanglish to rap music. Coordinating Producers: Pressa and Lesbian Gay TV. Available from Deep Dish TV (212)473-8933.

Mutiny on the Corporate

Sponsorship examines corporate cross-ownership in the media industry, censorship and media access issues. Coordinating Producers: Paper Tiger TV Collective. Available from Deep Dish TV (212)473-8933.

On Television: Public Trust or Private Property

(1988), 58 min., Part 2 from On Television series. On Television, LTD., 388 Broadway, Studio 4, New York, NY 10013; (212) 925-5289.

Documentary examines the conflict between commercial interests and public responsibilities of television.

On Television: Teach the Children

(1992), part 3 of On Television series. Documentary explores television's role as educator.

Production Notes: Fast Food for Thought

(1987) by Jason Simon, 28 min. A compilation of real-time commercials—from McDonalds, Pepsi and many others—followed by slow motion versions of each ad with voice over narrator of the actual production notes developed by the advertising agencies. Demonstrates the constructed nature of media. Video Data Bank, 112 S. Michigan Ave. Suite 312, Chicago, IL 60603; (312) 345-3550. \$79.95 for non-profit groups; \$200 for institutions.

Slaying the Dragon

(1988), 60 min. NAATA/Cross Current Media, 346 Ninth Street, Second Floor, San Francisco, CA 94103; (415) 552-9550, \$225. Images of Asian American women in the media.

WARNING: The Media May be Hazardous to Your Health

(1991) 36 min. Examines the portrayal of women in the media from advertising to pornography. Not suitable for viewing by children due to graphic depictions of violence against women. Based on a slide show by activist and former model Ann Simonton. \$150 to purchase; \$40 to rent. Available from Media Watch.

FROM THE CHAIR

Standing On Your Shoulders

By Anthony Riddle

I cannot recall a time I was so nervous as when I sat before Congress waiting to give testimony on the National Information Infrastructure Act of 1993 (HR3636). Before me were the 10 members of Representative Edward Markey's (D-Mass.) Subcommittee on Telecommunications and Finance. People who could decide the future of PEG access by either commission or omission.

Sharing the panel with me was a representative for the National League of Cities/NATO/Conference of Mayors/National Association of Counties, one for the Center for Media Education and representatives of the big players in information: United States Telephone Association, National Cable Television Association, National Association of Broadcasters, Association of Independent Television Stations and the Small Cable Business Association.

There were 250 people in a room for 200 with another 75 waiting in the hall. Four different television crews. A still photographer with a motor-drive. Men and women in power suits.

That's not what made me nervous. What made me nervous was the tremendous group effort that went into getting me there and prepared. What made me nervous was all of you who work everyday to produce your programs, to teach the public, to reach out to others, to protect and preserve your centers.

Hubert Jessup and the Boston area crew initiated the contact with Congressman Markey's office and hustled to get us a place at the table. It took at least 10 people to prepare our testimony: Alan Bushong, Sam Behrend, Andrew Blau, Phil Clapp, Jim Horwood, Hubert Jessup, Carl Kucharski, Barbara Popovich, Joe Van Eaton and myself. Jim Horwood and Paul LeValley sat right behind me, rooting me on and prompting me during the three plus hours of proceedings.

As a group, we hung right in there, making sure access remained a consideration in all areas of discussion.

Several times during the hearing, Congress members restated the support for PEG access that is written into the bill. Our primary suggested change was as follows:

"Section 659 requires common carriers to provide capacity for PEG

capacity on an equal basis to the current PEG requirements of cable companies. In order to provide for equivalency, however, Section 659 needs to be amended by adding the words "services, facilities and equipment" after "capacity." Section 659 (B)(1)(A) would read:

(A) capacity, services, facilities and equipment for public, educational and governmental use."

In the final summation, we stated support for three to four more years of protections for the cable industry to prevent immediate purchase of existing cable systems by the local telephone company. We thought this would tend to eliminate the competition responsible for the abundance of channel capacity which the public depends on. I'm sure Alliance support for NCTA raised a few eyebrows. . .

We also supported the position of the NLC, NATOA, COM and NACO - that allocation and financial support of the public spectrum should remain a local responsibility.

We supported "regulatory symmetry" - that telephone or other companies offering video services have the same requirements as local cable operators with regard to franchise fees and support of PEG access.

We noted that access without media literacy is hollow.

Finally, since Congressman Markey repeatedly implored the NAB rep to endorse the "violence chip" in the cable box, we noted that, in access, where the people are allowed to make the programs that really interest them, violence is almost unknown. Interesting concept. . .

The Alliance "production" went well, to the credit of all involved. Outside observers, including Congressional staffers, were complimentary. The Alliance will likely be asked to participate again. Perhaps the Alliance is crossing a new threshold; perhaps time, technology and our efforts over the years have placed us in the right position at the right time.

Without a doubt, the struggle continues. But I must say I have rarely felt so proud of being part of a positive group effort as I did February 2 in Washington, DC.

Anthony Riddle is chair of the Alliance for Community Media. He is executive director of the Minneapolis Television Network, 125 SE Main St., Minneapolis, MN 55414. Telephone 612/331-8576. Fax 612/331-8578. e-mail <mtn@MR.NET>.

The full text of the Alliance written testimony and HR3636 are posted on the Alliance BBS. To connect, call 217/359-9118.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Aloha Spirit. . . A Dual Greeting

By T. Andrew Lewis

Aloha. This melodic Hawaiian greeting is virtually universally recognized as a warm welcome. And, it is certain to be heard a lot this summer as the Alliance holds its 1994 International Conference and Trade Show in Honolulu.

What's special about this event? Let's start with the unprecedented location. Hawaii opens for us an opportunity to expand our collective cultural quotient. Gateway to the Pacific Rim, the islands sit at the crossroads of such global diversity that we have titled this year's gathering an **international** conference. But despite its international posture, the 50th state frequently suffers from isolation and outright discrimination when it comes to gatherings of groups like ours. Why? The evasion is certainly due to geography and, yes, economics.

Please know that we have made every plan and are making every effort to ensure that this is as affordable as any mainland conference for **all** of our attendees. The University of Hawaii will provide us an unprecedented quantity of low cost housing while the Ala Moana Hotel offers extraordinarily reasonable room rates. Finally, a special combination of assistance programs are being developed to aid in getting you there and getting you in. The Alliance board and staff hope that you can attend.

Your island colleagues are anxious to extend the Aloha greeting to all in July! I hope to see you there.

Aloha. One comes to comprehend the second part of the Aloha Spirit as that positive force that merges with the soul and goes along with us upon our departure from good company. Thus, Aloha is also used to bid farewell as one journeys on. It is this spirit of Aloha that I impart to you today.

Some three years ago, convinced that telecommunications represented a resource to be marshaled for the pursuit of progressive socioeconomic change, I stepped into the directorship of the then NFLCP. At my first public engagement in that role [Grand Rapids (MI), May 1991], I stated unequivocally that I believed that community media, among other things, could be "...the pipeline through which the desperate cries of our youth could flow as opposed to their blood which now flows through the streets of our cities. We are all aware that our ability to communicate one with another as individuals, groups and as nations is the fulcrum about which human progress and world peace will pivot in the coming decades. . ." I stated further that "...media could serve no higher purpose than to foster and promote human progress. . ."

Today, I reiterate those beliefs which have only intensified during my tenure as your executive director. It has been my honor to participate in

continued on page 28

By Alan Bushong

A review of the Alliance's 1993 accomplishments indicates that we are effective at damage control, having won a significant appellate court decision to ban cable operators from censoring PEG and leased access channels. Our next challenge is to shape our future through a public interest driven telecommunications policy. Much of our 1993 work builds and extends coalitions which provide us collective power for the greatest opportunity to secure meaningful public space on the developing information superhighway.

Damage Control: Courts Find in Favor of Free Expression.

In late 1993, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit issued two rulings favorable to the Alliance for Community Media and constituent groups using PEG and leased access channels across the country. First, the court found unconstitutional Section 10 of the 1992 Cable Act and subsequent FCC regulations allowing cable operators to censor "indecent" programs on PEG and leased access channels.

In a related decision, the same court overturned the FCC's midnight to 6 a.m. "safe harbor" for indecent broadcast programs, stating that the FCC failed to consider the rights of adults in the attempt to shield children from indecency.

Creating a Positive Environment: Alliance Joins Forces with Public Interest Groups. In 1993, the Alliance joined a diverse set of public interest groups in the Washington D.C.-based Telecommunications Policy Roundtable. The Roundtable has taken a leadership position in promoting a public interest oriented national telecommunications system based on the following principles:

- Universal access to communications
- The right to effectively communicate
- A vital civic sector empowering our pluralistic society
- Democratic policy making

Other roundtable members include: the Center for Media Education, the Roundtable convener; ACLU; People for the American Way; NAACP; the National Education Association; the American Library Association; the Media Access Project (MAP); the Benton Foundation; the National Federation of Community Broadcasters; the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility.

The Alliance also joined with the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers (AIVF), the National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture (NAMAC), the National Coalition of Independent Public Broadcasting Producers (NCIPBP), and the PBS Minority Consortia (PBSMC) to coordinate and align public policy efforts focusing on affordable access and free expression.

Establishing Public Interest Principles as Law. The next step is to enact public interest principles into regulatory law. Congress is now developing legislation anticipated to allow both telephone companies and cable companies the ability to provide multi-channel video programming.

The Alliance and the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors (NATOA) are working together on language. NATOA's recently-released platform includes strong statements supporting PEG and leased access. The alignment of the Alliance's and NATOA's platforms establishes a basis for legislation which will preserve public space and provide the resources necessary for diverse participation. Success with this legislation will depend on active and vocal support from the collective constituent groups which use PEG access channels across the country.

Major points include:

1. PEG access channels. Community presence on the dominant media is essential for a healthy democracy.
2. Operating and capital support for access facilities separate from franchise fees. Communities require staffed centers to provide outreach, training and production facilities. Otherwise, a channel requirement means little.
3. Liability protection for access entities, cities and cable operators who do not exercise editorial control on access channels. Public access is an electronic public forum. Those who use the channels take credit and responsibility for their speech.
4. Itemization of all programming and operating costs, if PEG access and public benefit costs are itemized on the bill. Subscribers deserve the opportunity to fairly judge costs as a whole.

Alan Bushong chairs the Alliance's Public Policy Committee. He is executive director Capital Community Television, 585 Liberty St., Salem, OR 97308-2342. Telephone 503/588-2288. Fax 503/588-6055.

INTERNATIONAL

Video Olympiade Winners Named

By Nantz Rickard

Congratulations to the winners of the U.S. contest to participate in the *Second International Video Olympiade*. Cincinnati Community Video's Tim Jester won for his entry *Just About a Day in Cincinnati*; Maria Chavez of Albuquerque, New Mexico for her video *Toxic Victims Assistance Corporation*; Sandra Marroquin, also of New Mexico, for her entry *Gangs*; and Sarah Smiley of Jamaka Plain, Massachusetts for her video *Weatherman*. Also selected as part of the ten member U.S. delegation were: Robert Arévalo for The Mirror Project's *Living Large*, and one of the high school students who participated in The Education Channel's video *Getting Your Feet Wet in Tampa Bay*. Alice French, Educational SIG Chair, was also invited to join the delegation for her many contributions to the education of youth in the use of media.

The Olympiade will be held from May 7 to 11 in Scandinavia, on a cruise scheduled to start in Copenhagen, with stops in Oslo and

Gothenburg. Delegates are the official representatives for the United States and will be involved in discussions and business with delegates from the 30 other countries expected to attend. There will also be plenty of opportunities to meet other community producers and share tapes and experiences.

So far, non-delegate participation is still unlimited. Contact your region or region international chair immediately if you are interested in attending. Gloria Walker is coordinating attendance to the Olympiade and can be reached at her fax number 505/243-5883, for questions and confirmations.

As a final note, I would like to extend special thanks to Gloria Walker of Quote...Unquote in Albuquerque and Vice Chair of the International Committee for her outstanding work in pulling together this event for the Alliance.

Nantz Rickard chairs the Alliance's International Committee. She is Deputy Director of DCTV, 1400 20th Street NW, Suite G-2, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone 202/659-6260, fax 202/296-8334.

Urban Access Managers to Meet in New Orleans

Urban organizational members will be meeting for an Urban Access Manager's Cable Access Conference, May 24-28, in New Orleans, around the National Cable Television Association's annual show, May 22-25.

Along with attending the NCTA Trade Show, workshops and meeting with cable representatives, attendees will discuss the concept of community communications centers, their funding and problems specific to urban access.

For more information, contact Joyce Miller, Executive Director, Cincinnati Community Video, 3130 Wasson Road, Cincinnati, OH 45209. Telephone 513/871-2730, fax 513/871-2748.

Clarification

In the September/October issue of CTR, the sidebar to the article "Community Video in Mexico" introduced a video project in Costa Rica. The name of the sponsoring organization was omitted: It is ANAI or the "Asociación de los Nuevos Alquimistas," which means Association of New Alchemists. It has roots in the New Alchemy Institute here in the United States.

Back Issues

A number of CMR issues, including this one, are available for bulk purchase at a cost of \$2 each, plus shipping and handling. To inquire about availability, contact CMR at 616/454-6663.

Accessing the Alliance

Jobline. For access jobs across America, call 202/393-2653.

Bulletin Board. To connect, call 217/359-9118, and set your computer's modem to 300, 1200 or 2400 baud, 8 bits, 1 stop bit, no parity.

National Office. Call 202/393-2650, fax 202/393-2653, or write the Alliance at 666 11th St. NW, Suite 806, Washington, DC 20001-4542.

Address Changes. Please contact the national office at the address above for membership or CMR subscription address changes.

Community Media Review.

Advertising and editorial, call 616/454-6663, fax 616/454-6698, or write CMR, 15 Ionia SW, Suite 201, Grand Rapids, MI 49503-4102.

CMR Editorial Board Seeking Applications

The Information Services Committee is accepting applications for upcoming vacancies on the Community Media Review Editorial Board.

Appointed to two year terms by the Alliance's national board of directors, editorial board members work with the CMR coordinator in developing themes, content and timelines, identifying authors, soliciting articles, and making recommendations regarding operating procedures and other issues. Board members meet monthly on conference calls and annually at the national conference.

Interested parties should possess a commitment to community media and the First Amendment, be able to participate in monthly calls, serve on subcommittees, and be a current member of the Alliance.

For an application or more information, contact Deborah Vinsel, Information Services Chair, Thurston Community Television, 2940 Limited Lane, Olympia, WA 98502. Telephone 206/956-3100. Deadline for submission is March 25.

Up & Coming

March 11-12. *Central States Spring Conference.* "The Race to Indy," emphasis on democratizing and managing media. Indianapolis, IN. Contact Norm Compton at 419/784-3401, or John Knox at 317/327-4529.

March 18 & 19. Southeast Region and Tampa Educational Cable Consortium *1994 Tools of the Trade Conference.* Tampa, FL. Contact 813/254-2253.

April 1. Deadline for entries. *EarthPeace International Film Festival.* Documentaries, animation, short or feature length film or video addressing the categories of the Environment, War and Peace, and Justice and Human

Rights. For details and entry forms, contact EarthPeace International Film Festival, Vermont World Peace Film Foundation, PO Box 531, Burlington, VT 05402-0531. Telephone 802/660-2600. Fax 802/658-3311.

April 21-23. Alliance for Community Media National Board Meeting, Washington, DC. Contact the national office at 202/393-2650 for details.

May 7-11. *Second Olympiade of Local Video and TV Creation* in Copenhagen, Gothenburg and Oslo in Scandinavia. Contact Susanne Lund, Mediecentret KURT, Lersopark Alle 2, 2100 Copenhagen O, Denmark. Fax nr

45 31181333.

May 22-25. *Cable '94.* Annual show of the National Cable Television Association. For details, contact the NCTA at 202/775-3669.

May 24-28. *Urban Access Manager's Cable Access Conference,* New Orleans, LA., concurrent with NCTA show. Focusing primarily on community communications centers and financing. Contact Joyce Miller, Cincinnati Community Video, 513/871-2730 voice, 513/871-2748 fax.

July 20-24. *Alliance for Community Media International Conference,* Honolulu, HI.

Grassroots Initiative Eases Way to Hawai'i Conference

Conventions are critical to the Alliance. As well as exchanging ideas and gaining new skills, it's also where we elect our leadership and make other important decisions determining the direction of the Alliance.

The Alliance board wanted to do everything it could to help get grassroots folks there, so a small fund was set aside to assist transportation costs for low-income members. We are very happy to introduce the National Transportation Initiative for the 1994 conference in Hawai'i. The NTI will be administered through the regional boards, and each region will be developing its own distribution plan. Contact your regional liaison if you are interested in finding out more about this program.

The Registration Fee Waiver will also be offered this year through your regional board. The Registration Fee Waiver program subsidizes or waives convention registration costs for members who find these fees prohibitive. Members receiving this benefit are still responsible for the cost of special events. Information about the application process will be available soon. Contact your regional liaison.

Additionally, Olelo is accepting volunteers to help

out before and during the conference – a great way to participate and meet the locals at the same time. Slots are limited and assigned on a first come basis. Contact Volunteer Coordinator Jim Benjamin at 808/834-0007 for more details.

Several regions are organizing charter flights. To find out if there is a flight leaving from your city, or, if you are interested in organizing a flight, call your grassroots liaison.

A large number of beds have been reserved at the University of Hawai'i for a very reasonable rate, and they include some meals as well. They are mostly dormitory style – two beds per room, shared bathroom – but there are some 2 and 4 person apartments available. More information about U of H housing will be included in the convention publicity, coming your way soon.

So, if you find the idea of an Alliance conference hosted by one of the brightest stars in our access constellation (in Honolulu to boot!) tempting, but daunted by the price tag, don't miss out – strategize.

– Fiona Boneham, Grassroots Committee Chair



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LITTLE CITY FOUNDATION

continued from page 25

the debate and development surrounding the future apportionment of democracy and power. Telecommunications is not just an industry, but rather the framework upon which our ways of life will be built. I am quite comfortable knowing that this priceless resource will remain in your hands. As I have observed over the months past, you have shown that dedication, tenacity and spirit will prevail despite the odds. Our future success [yes, our success since I will forever remain actively in this struggle] will hinge upon our adherence to a few edicts. Please indulge me the opportunity of reviewing with you some of the essences of my thoughts that I have shared earlier with you.

First, identify every opportunity and seize the time. Time is of the essence in the explosive arena of telecommunications. However, please, never permit time and expedience to mitigate the paramount position of inclusion and diversity in the process and in the system. Diversity is an anti-expedient. It is conflicted and uncomfortable. And it is the fragmented but collective strength that is the essence of democracy. It is an imperative.

Secondly, we must continue to support our convictions. It is our responsibility to invest even more of our time and dollars in our belief in free and diverse expression. As the commercial stakes rise, so must our resolve and our effort.

Thirdly, know ye thine enemy. Even more importantly, we must know, acknowledge and recognize ourselves and our allies. Increasing demands upon us in the public interest and our collaborators coupled with diminishing resources saturate the unwary with frustration and misdirected venom causing us to attack our organizations, our leadership, ourselves and our colleagues. We have all seen it far too often. Our shortcomings, no matter how understandable, become our subtitle. We must stop it now! The time has come for a ceasefire. Seize the time.

Finally, but most importantly, our eyes must stay forever focused upon our goal. The policy debate, the technological jargon and commodities, the frustration and plain human frailties can cause us to forget, sometimes, that it is more than just connections and video skills or "influence lists" and schmoozing that we seek. Certainly, all of us are aiming for that higher goal. Your commitment and achievement over the years confirm this. For me, these are implements - tools to be utilized in furtherance of my personal and professional purpose of fostering human progress.

Dear friends, a very difficult decision was reached over the past few weeks. I decided not to renew my contract as executive director. Heading the Alliance has afforded me some of the most exciting, invigorating, challenging, satisfying and rewarding experiences of my lifetime. On the other hand, it has not at all been an easy undertaking, but rather a busy and consuming one. I have met individuals for whom I have developed great admiration, and with some of whom lifetime friendships have been forged. I have met with the golden face of great successes. And I have been faced with shortcomings. I have learned the intricacies of a system, of a movement and of a flourishing group of individuals for which I have the utmost regard and faith.

This has been a priceless stay on the watch. Thank you for the privilege. I will be with you through the conference to ensure a smooth transition. After that event, however, it will be incumbent upon me to seize the time. I shall take with me the skills that I brought and those many that I have gained here, and move into an arena more proximate to my emerging objectives. I will share more about that with you in July. However, I will not wait to say to those board, staff, members, collaborators and colleagues whose integrity, understanding, honesty and commitment have meant so much to me and to this endeavor - you know who you are - please accept my sincerest gratitude and my heartfelt congratulations for your commitment and achievements.

To all, I bid you the Aloha Spirit. First, I will greet you with an Aloha upon your arrival in Honolulu. Afterward, I will bid you Aloha and farewell for the moment. Please know, though, that the spirit that we have kindled will go with us wherever we may venture. *Aloha and Mahalo.*

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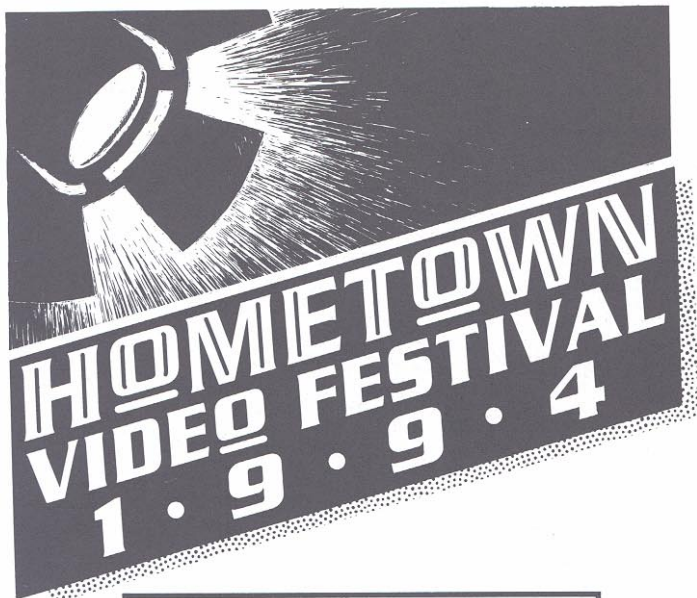
• Non-voting memberships available to organizations and individuals at the following levels:

- Alliance Associate, \$2500 - copies of all briefs and reports.
- Alliance Supporter, \$500 - copies of all reports and enclosures.
- Alliance Subscriber, \$350 - copies of all reports.

Direct membership inquiries to Richard Turner, 'Ōlelo: the Corporation for Community Television, 960 Māpunapuna, 2nd floor, Honolulu, HI, 96819, or phone (808) 834-0007 ext.1714.

Voting Members: Chicago Access Corporation, Illinois • Montgomery Community Television, Inc., Maryland • Columbus Community Cable Access, Inc., Ohio • Staten Island Television, New York • Boston Community Access & Programming Foundation, Inc., Massachusetts • GRTV, Grand Rapids, Michigan • Tuscon Community Cable Corporation, Arizona • 'Ōlelo: The Corporation for Community TV, Hawaii • Multnomah Community TV, Oregon • Manhattan Neighborhood Network, New York • Cable Access St. Paul, Minnesota.

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